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SC clears JSW's Rs 19,700cr takeover of Bhushan Steel

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Mkts tank by 1% after 100% pharma tariffs

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Trump hosts Sharif and Munir in the White House

NEW YORK/ISLAMABAD, 26 SEPT

US President Donald Trump hosted Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Army Chief Asim Munir at the White House for discussions on regional security, counter-terrorism, and bilateral cooperation. The visit signals an unexpected warming of ties after years of strained relations under President Biden. Mr Sharif praised Trump as a "man of peace" and commended his role in facilitating a ceasefire between Pakistan and India. The leaders also discussed trade and investment opportunities, with Sharif inviting US firms to invest in Pakistan's IT, energy, and agriculture sectors. *—PTI*

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Calcutta HC orders return of residents deported to B'desh

KOLKATA, 26 SEPT

The Calcutta High Court on Friday declared the Centre's deportation of two Birbhum families to Bangladesh illegal and ordered their return within a month. The families, including pregnant Sonali Bibi and Sweety Bibi, claimed they were detained in Delhi and deported despite possessing citizenship documents. The court criticised the deportation, stating it was "illegal," and dismissed claims for a stay. Additional Solicitor General Ashok Kumar Chakarborti argued the High Court lacked jurisdiction, as the deportation was handled by Delhi authorities. TMC MP Samirul Islam praised the court's ruling as a "victory for Bengal." *—PTI*

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UN blacklists 70 more companies for Israel ties

GENEVA, 26 SEPT

The United Nations (UN) has added nearly 70 more companies from 11 countries to its blacklist of firms accused of violating Palestinian human rights through business ties with Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank. The updated 'database of companies' now includes 158 firms, mostly Israeli, along with others from the US, Canada, China, Britain, France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. Newcomers include German building-materials giant Heidelberg Materials, Portuguese rail provider Steconfer, and Spanish engineering firm Ineco. Existing names include Airbnb. *—PTI*

6 dead, 6 injured as steel plant in Ch'garh collapses

RAIPUR, 26 SEPT

Six workers were killed and as many injured when the roof of a structure at a private steel plant collapsed in Chhattisgarh's capital Raipur on Friday, police said. The incident took place at the plant of Godawari Power and Ispat Limited in Siltara area on the outskirts of the capital, Raipur Senior Superintendent of Police Lal Umed Singh said. "The roof of a structure collapsed, trapping workers underneath. Soon after being alerted about it, a police team was sent to the spot, and a rescue operation was launched. Six workers were killed and six others sustained injuries in the accident," the SSP said. More were feared trapped at the time of publishing. *—PTI*

Trump slaps 100% tariffs on Indian pharmaceutical exports

WASHINGTON, 26 SEPT

US President Donald Trump has said that he will put import taxes of 100 per cent on pharmaceutical drugs, 50 per cent on kitchen cabinets and bathroom vanities, 30 per cent on upholstered furniture and 25 per cent on heavy trucks starting on 1 Oct.

"Starting 1st Oct, 2025, we will be imposing a 100 per cent Tariff on any branded or patented Pharmaceutical Product, unless a Company IS BUILDING their Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plant in America," Trump wrote on his Truth Social on Thursday. "IS BUILDING will be defined as, 'breaking ground' and/or 'under construction.' There will, therefore, be no Tariff on these Pharmaceutical Products if construction has started."

It was unclear how the tariffs would apply to companies that already have factories in the US.

The posts showed that Trump's devotion to tariffs did not end with the trade frameworks and import taxes that were launched in August, a reflection of the President's confidence that taxes will help to reduce the government's budget deficit while increasing domestic manufacturing.

The tariffs are another dose of uncertainty for the US economy with a solid stock market but a weakening outlook for jobs and elevated inflation. These new taxes on imports could pass through to consumers in the form of higher prices.

While Trump did not provide a legal justification for the tariffs, he said that the taxes on imported kitchen cabinets and sofas were needed "for National Security and other reasons".

India said it was "closely monitoring" the situation and would "examine the impacts". *—Agencies*

Activist Sonam Wangchuk arrested for 'inciting' mob

He is booked under NSA; curfew continues for Day 3 in Leh

LEH, 26 SEPT

Police on Friday arrested climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, two days after protests demanding Ladakh's statehood and Sixth Schedule status left four people dead and 90 injured in the Union Territory.

Wangchuk was taken into custody at 2.30pm, the officials said, adding that he has been shifted out of Ladakh.

While there was no official word on the charges pressed against Wangchuk, sources within the Ladakh administration indicated that the stringent National Security Act (NSA) has been invoked.

The administration also snapped mobile internet services in the Leh area as a precautionary measure.

Wangchuk, a leading voice for the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), has been spearheading the five-year-long agitation for statehood and constitutional safeguards for the residents of Leh and Kargil, which form part of the Ladakh Union Territory carved out from erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019.

The Centre blamed him for inciting the recent violence.

AAP leader Saurabh Bharadwaj and party workers protest activist Sonam Wangchuk's arrest, at Jantar Mantar, Friday *PHOTO: PTI*

"To say it was instigated by me is to find a scapegoat, rather than addressing the core of the problem, and this will lead us nowhere," Wangchuk said, denying the allegations, on Thursday.

LAB's legal advisor Haji Ghulam Mustafa said the said "the arrest cannot be termed as a wise decision".

The body also rejected any foreign hand in the violence and demanded a judicial probe in the matter.

The arrest came a day after the Union home ministry cancelled the FCRA licence of the Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL), an organisation founded by Wangchuk, citing alleged financial discrepancies and a fund transfer deemed to be against "national interest".

Curfew remained in force for the third consecutive day in Leh, with no untoward incident being reported. *—PTI*

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'ENTIRELY BASELESS'

NATO claims PM-Putin nexus, India cries foul

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

India on Friday described NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte's claim that Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** called **Russian President Vladimir Putin** to discuss Ukraine amid US tariffs on Indian goods as "entirely baseless".

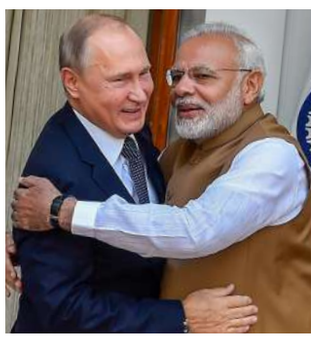
External Affairs Ministry (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said such "speculative or careless" remarks misrepresent Modi's engagements and are "unacceptable."

Strongly justifying India's continued procurement of Russian crude oil, Jaiswal emphasised there can be no 'double standards,' noting that US President Trump's recent tariffs on India appear critical of Western energy ties with Russia.

He called Rutte's statement 'factually incorrect,' adding, 'At no point has Prime Minister Modi spoken with President Putin in the manner suggested.'

India's energy imports, he said, are aimed at ensuring predictable and affordable costs for consumers, and New Delhi will continue safeguarding national interests and economic security. Jaiswal also dismissed recent EU criticism, urging Western nations to avoid double standards.

In a related matter, India has requested Russia to release 27 Indian nationals recently recruited into the Russian military, with more than 150 Indians reportedly serving, some forced into frontline duties in Ukraine, the MEA said. *—PTI*



2,417 Indians have been deported or repatriated from the US: MEA

CM says caste census deadline will not be extended

BENGALURU, 26 SEPT

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday said the technical issues affecting the Social and Educational Survey—widely referred to as the "caste census"—have "almost been sorted out" and that the deadline for the survey would not be extended.

Siddaramaiah chaired a video-conference meeting with ministers, senior officials, Backward Classes Commission Chairman Madhusudan R Naik, Deputy Commissioners (DCs), and Zilla Panchayat CEOs of all districts.

"The survey work started on 22 September and will be completed by 7 October. There are some technical issues, all of which have to be resolved. They have almost been sorted out. So, the survey work will be held in a full-fledged manner from today," Siddaramaiah said.

Concerns have been raised over the "slow pace of the survey", with technical glitches and server issues hampering data collection.

Speaking to press, he said all DCs and CEOs had been instructed to take the survey "very seriously" to ensure it is completed within the deadline.

"The survey will have to speed up. From today, in all districts it will speed up, including in Bengaluru," he added. *—PTI*

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Locals, cops clash in UP over 'I Love Muhammad' poster

BAREILLY, 26 SEPT

A confrontation erupted outside a mosque in Bareilly on Friday after a proposed 'I Love Muhammad' demonstration was cancelled. Maulana Tauqeer Raza, leader of the Ittehad-e-Millat Council, announced on Thursday that the protest would proceed "at any cost," but later called it off, citing lack of permission.

Crowds gathered after Friday prayers in the Kotwali area, holding posters with 'I Love Muhammad'. Police attempted to disperse the angry protesters; however, stones were pelted, prompting police to use force. Visuals on social media showed locals clashing with officers armed with batons.

The controversy originated on 9 September, when police in Kanpur filed an FIR against nine individuals and 15 unidentified persons for installing 'I Love Muhammad' boards during a Barawafat procession. *—PTI*

EVIDENT INACTION

Despite many promises from the State government, a pothole at Gopala Gowda Circle on Ambedkar Veedhi remains unfixed in the City, on Friday *PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD*

ALLOWS ELSEWHERE

Supreme Court bans green cracker sale in Delhi-NCR

The Supreme Court said the existing ban 'hardly implemented' on the ground *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

- The conditional order will remain until the plea is heard again on 8 October after the MoEFCC report

The Supreme Court on Friday allowed certified manufacturers to produce green crackers, provided their sale is not carried out in Delhi-NCR without approval.

A bench headed by Chief Justice BR Gavai, along with Justices K Vinod Chandran and NV Anjaria, asked the Centre to review the absolute ban on firecracker manufacture in Delhi-NCR. The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) was directed to consult all stakeholders, including the Delhi government, manufacturers, and sellers, before a final decision.

"In the meantime, certified manufacturers may produce crackers, subject to an undertaking that they will not sell in prohibited areas until further orders," the bench said. The conditional order will remain until the plea is heard again on 8 October after the MoEFCC report.

The CJI-led bench stressed balancing pollution control with livelihood concerns, noting that a complete ban is "hardly implemented" and citing Bihar's mining ban, which fostered illegal mafias. The bench directed the Centre to ensure consultations before the next hearing. *—PTI*

'Amar Singh Chamkila,' Diljit bag Emmy nominations

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

Actor-singer Diljit Dosanjh on Thursday earned a nomination at the International Emmy Awards 2025 in the 'Best Performance by an Actor' category for his role in filmmaker Imtiaz Ali's biopic 'Amar Singh Chamkila.' Ali's film also received a nomination in the TV Movie/Mini-Series category. The International Academy of Television Arts and Sciences announced the nominations in New York, with the film as the lone Indian entry. Produced by Window Seat Films, the Netflix movie features Dosanjh as the Punjabi singer killed in 1988 alongside his wife Amarjot, played by Parineeti Chopra.

The winners will be announced at the 53rd International Emmy Awards on 24 November. *—Agencies*

DKS' portfolio expanded with GBA

BENGALURU, 26 SEPT

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's portfolio was modified due the creation of the Greater Bengaluru Development Authority. According to a notification released by State Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, Shivakumar's portfolio, which previously had him as the minister for Major and Medium Irrigation, Bengaluru City Development including BBMP, BDA, BWSSB, BMRDA, BMRCL (Connected to these authorities related to Town planning) was modified to Major and Medium Irrigation, Bengaluru Urban Development (connected to Bengaluru Town Planning), Greater Bengaluru Authority and 5 City Corporations coming under the Greater Bengaluru Authority and all the Urban Local Bodies coming under Bengaluru Urban District (Except service matters), BDA, BWSSB, BMRDA and BMRCL, on the advice of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. *—Salar News*

Village action plans must be filed by 2 Oct: Khandre

BIDAR, 26 SEPT

Member of Parliament Sagar Khandre has instructed officials to prepare action plans and fund estimates for 196 selected villages under the Dharti Aabha Janjati Gram Utkarsh – Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan by 2 October. Speaking at a meeting organised by the Union Tribal Affairs Ministry, District Administration and SC Welfare Department, he stressed that clean drinking water must be prioritised and officials should consult MLAs, panchayat members and villagers before finalising plans. Each village will have a Rs 2 crore plan. Most villages are in Aurad, Chitaguppa, Humnabad and Kamalnagar taluks, but Bhalki has only four, which Khandre questioned. Officials clarified more villages will be added later. *—Salar News*

CM raps officials for slow progress of the caste survey

'Tech issues have been fixed, 10% of survey must be done daily'

NEW DELHI, 31 OCT

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah directed officials to increase the pace at which they are conducting the Social and Educational Survey—widely referred to as the "caste census"— as he said that "90 per cent" of the technical issues that slowed enumerators had been sorted out.

"So far, only 2–4 per cent of survey progress has been achieved daily. Strict instructions have been given that a minimum of 10 per cent progress should be achieved every day," Siddaramaiah said after chairing a video-conference meeting with ministers, senior officials, Backward Classes Commission Chairman Madhusudan R Naik, Deputy Commissioners (DCs), and Zilla Panchayat CEOs of all districts.

He added that DCs and CEOs had been directed to hold daily review meetings and address any issues immediately. Further, regional commissioners, in-charge secretaries of districts, and District in-charge ministers have been instructed to ensure coordination and oversee the survey.

CM Siddaramaiah at meeting with ministers on the 'caste census,' in Bengaluru on Friday *PHOTO: X @SIDDARAMAIAH*

Officials said while the goal is to cover all 1.43 crore families in the State, only 2.76 lakh families have been surveyed thus far.

Saying that remuneration for enumerators has been released, Siddaramaiah added, "There are media reports that there is resistance in some places from teachers (who are enumerators). There may be some misconceptions. There is no resistance from anywhere. If anyone resists and doesn't cooperate, action will be taken in accordance with the law."

Enumerators, mostly government school teachers, visiting households door to door, have faced technical problems with the survey app in several locations.

Officials said server issues, failure in OTP generation, and network disruptions have affected data collection.

Acknowledging delays, Siddaramaiah said, "According to DCs, over 90 per cent of the issues have been sorted out and the remaining issues will be resolved soon. I have told the commission and the secretary to resolve all the issues. All the issues will be resolved, probably by today. The backlog of the last four days should be covered in the coming days."

The Karnataka High Court on Thursday declined to stop the survey but directed the State Backward Classes Commission to maintain the confidentiality of the collected data and ensure the voluntary participation of citizens.

The Chief Minister assured, "Whatever conditions imposed by the court will be followed."

"This is not just another exercise, it is the foundation for inclusive, evidence-based policymaking. Let us ensure every household is counted, and every voice is heard," he added.

The survey, being conducted by the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes, began on 22 September and is scheduled to continue until 7 October. *—PTI*

WELCOMES THE SURVEY

Archdiocese seeks fair representation in caste survey

BENGALURU, 26 SEPT

The Archdiocese of Bangalore on Friday welcomed the ongoing Social and Educational Survey—widely referred to as the "caste census"—while expressing hope that omissions of certain castes linked to Christianity in the published lists will be restored after the final analysis of the survey.

Addressing a press conference, Archbishop of Bangalore Peter Machado urged the government to ensure fair representation of all Christian communities and called on members of the Christian community to "take this survey seriously and responsibly, cooperating in a spirit of civic duty."

"Deletions, if any, risk denying historical communities their rightful recognition and may cause injustice in accessing welfare schemes," he said. "Since the government has removed all the other categories, there is no choice for us. We can't put any other category in our caste category, which is a little sad. I have told our people that—I leave it to your freedom. If you belong to a caste and you don't want to put a caste, I am with you. If you belong to a particular caste and you want to put it, it is left to you."

Earlier the Backward Classes Commission had said that the names of 33 castes with dual identities—having both Christian and Hindu caste names such as 'Kuruba Christian,' and 'Brahmin Christian,'—would be "masked but not removed".

Machado claimed that "under-reporting by Christians in past surveys had led to lower figures" in official reports.

"We are told we are 9.75 lakh in Bengaluru only. So if the numbers increase, perhaps we can ask the government to put us into the 2B or 2C category of OBC," he said. *—PTI*

'Cauvery Aarti' kicks off at KRS

BENGALURU, 25 SEPT

The 'Cauvery Aarti' for river Cauvery, modelled on the lines of 'Ganga Aarti' performed in Uttar Pradesh's Varanasi, was held at Krishna Raja Sagara (KRS) dam's Brindavan garden in Mandya on Friday. It will last for five days from 26 September to 2 Oct, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's office had said on Thursday.

On Friday evening, Shivakumar will formally launch the "Cauvery Aarti" programme by offering flowers to Cauvery river.

More than 8,000 to 10,000 tourists from various parts of the State and other the states are expected to attend every day, a statement said.

Shivakumar, who is also the Minister for Water Resources, has organised laddus distribution at free of cost for the tourists who come to watch Cauvery Aarti, it said. The Cauvery Aarti, which includes religious traditions, is said to be first such event being held in South India. *—PTI*

SAFETY FOR ALL

City Police Commissioner Seemanth Kumar Singh, actor Sudharani and senior police officers inaugurate the 'Rani Chennamma Force- Women Awareness' in Bengaluru on Friday. The initiative is aimed at enhancing women's safety and providing self defence training to women *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

STAND with GAZA
sio
END THE GENOCIDE! END ISRAELI OCCUPATION!
ನರಮೇಧದಿಂದ ಲಾಭ ಪಡೆಯುತ್ತಿರುವ ADANI, TATA, MAHINDRA- ನಿಮಗೆ ಮನುಷ್ಯತ್ವ ಇಲ್ಲವೆ?
ಗಜಾ ಜನರ ಜೊತೆಗೆ ನಾವಿದ್ದೇವೆ!

Members of the Bengaluru for Justice and Peace protest at Freedom Park, demanding that India stops importing weapons and surveillance technology from Israel while expressing solidarity with people of Palestine and Gaza on Friday. *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

BJP workers booked for protest in City

BENGALURU, 26 SEPT

A case has been registered against BJP functionaries for allegedly staging a protest in Gandhinagar constituency, violating a Karnataka High Court order that restricts demonstrations in the City to Freedom Park, police said on Friday.

The case was filed on a complaint by a police officer under Section 223 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and relevant provisions of the Karnataka Police Act, they said.

BJP State President BY Vijayendra had called for the protest on 24 September to highlight potholes and poor road conditions. Acting on this, party leaders and workers, led by district president Saptagiri Gowda, blocked RT Street in Gandhinagar around 11.30 am.

The protest, which continued till 1 pm, saw BJP workers, including Gandhinagar BJP Mandal president Karunakar Yadav, Pradeep, Jayaram and others, raising slogans against the government. Police said despite the HC order, the workers went ahead with the blockade, causing inconvenience to the public *—PTI*

41 pro-Kannada activists held for storming City hotel

BENGALURU, 26 SEPT

A total of 41 members of a pro-Kannada outfit were arrested for allegedly storming into a five-star hotel here during a Hindi Diwas-related event and causing a disturbance, police said on Friday.

The Ministry of Home Affairs' Rajbhasha Samiti had organised a 'Hindi Promotion Meeting' at the hotel, attended by six MPs, when the activists barged in on Thursday, sources said. Raising slogans, they alleged the meeting was an attempt to impose Hindi on non-Hindi speaking states.

According to police, the Parliamentary Committee on Official Language had organised a meeting from 23 September to 25 September at the hotel on Race Course Road. On the final day, the session began at 9.30 am.

"Between 10.45 am and 11 am, about 30 to 40 members of an organisation illegally entered the venue, obstructed the work of officials, and created a disturbance, causing a temporary disruption," the police statement said.

The protestors were taken into custody and the situation was brought under control. Police said 41 activists were later produced before the a court, which remanded them to judicial custody. *—PTI*

FINAL GOODBYE

Bhyrappa's last rites conducted with full State honours

MYSURU, 26 SEPT

Acclaimed Kannada writer SL Bhyrappa's last rites were conducted with full State honours at the foothills of Chamundi Hills by his sons and the literatures' caretaker on Friday.

Bhyrappa's sons Uday Shankar and Ravi Shankar and his caretaker Sahana performed the ceremony with Hoysala Brahmin tradition.

Earlier, security was tightened at his Kuvempu Nagar residence owing to differences in the family when the body was taken there for some rituals.

A ten-member troop led by Police officer Shivananda paid tributes to the department soul by gun salute.

Earlier, Union Minister Prahalad Joshi, District Minister HC Mahadevappa, MLC K Shivakumar, MLA TS Srivatsa, Deputy Commissioner G Lakshmikanth Reddy placed wreath and respected the writer with all state honours. Joshi and Mahadevappa handed over the national flag to Bhyrappas' sons.

Sahana lit the funeral pyre with Uday and Ravi.

Acclaimed Kannada writer SL Bhyrappa's last rites were conducted at the foothills of Chammundi Hills on Friday *PHOTO: SALAR*

Residents from Santheshivara of Hassan district, Bhyarappa's native, also arrived in three buses and paid tributes to the writer.

Bhyrappa authored about 25 novels and four volumes of literary criticism, along with works on aesthetics, social issues, and culture.

His celebrated novels include 'Vamshavriksha', 'Daatu', 'Parva', and 'Mandara'. Several of his works, such as 'Naayi-Neralu', 'Matadana', 'Vamshavriksha', and 'Tabbaliyu Neenaade Magane', have been adapted into films, while 'Gruhabhanga' and 'Daatu' were made into TV series.

His autobiography is titled 'Bhitti' (Canvas).

He was the recipient of prestigious honours, including the Padma Bhushan, Padma Shri, Saraswati Samman, and Sahitya Akademi Awards. *—Salar News*

2 HELD FOR ASSAULTING 'SAREE THIEF' IN CITY

BENGALURU, 26 SEPT

Two people have been arrested for allegedly assaulting a woman in public for stealing a bundle of sarees kept outside a shop in the city, police said on Friday.

The incident occurred on Avenue Road in Chickpet on 21 September and was recorded by a shopkeeper on his mobile phone. The video, uploaded on social media, soon went viral, they said.

According to police, Umedram, 44, and his employee Mahendra Seervi, 25, were arrested and remanded to judicial custody for assaulting the woman, a native of Andhra Pradesh, outside their shop.

A senior police officer said preliminary investigation revealed the woman, a habitual offender, allegedly stole a bundle of sarees left unattended outside the shop on 20 September. After inquiries and reviewing CCTV footage, the shopkeeper identified her and kept a watch until she was caught the next day.

The accused allegedly kicked, punched, dragged, and humiliated her before handing her to police. Based on the shop owner's complaint, she too was arrested for theft, while a separate case of assault and outraging modesty was registered against the accused. *—PTI*

Raitha Dasara procession takes off from Mysuru Palace

MYSURU, 26 SEPT

The Raitha Dasara celebrations at Kote Anjaneyaswamy temple abutting the north gate of Mysuru Palace was flagged off by State Agriculture Minister N Cheluvarayaswamy on Friday.

A large number of farmers took part in the colourful procession, which passed through main streets of Mysuru, culminating at Raitha Dasara venue at JK Grounds.

Various folk troupes, such as the Nandi Dwaja, Nagari Tamate, Veeragase dance, Veerabhadra Kunitha, Puja Kunitha, Chilipili Gombe, Naadaswara took part in the procession. Desi breed cows such as the ox-like Punganur and Hallikar breed were the cynosure of the procession, alongside Bandur sheep and bullock carts.

While flagging off the event, Cheluvarayaswamy hailed farmers for keeping tradition alive and noted that the festival had attracted attention worldwide.

The Raitha Dasara Subcommittee also displayed the modern agriculture tools and machines along the procession this year including Nano Urea liquid fertiliser application, Kisan Cart, Swaraj Machines, Power Inter cultivator, high-tech paddy harvester, power tillers and other agriculture tools machines.

MLA K Harishgowda, CESC chairman and MLA Ramesh Bandisiddegowda, Raitha Dasara sub-committee chief Yogesh and others were also present. *—Salar News*

Bandur sheep and desi bred cows such as the ox-like Punganur and Hallikar breed were the cynosure of the procession, which took place in Mysuru on Friday *PHOTO: SALAR*

PHOTO: PTI

Tej Pratap floats 'Jan Shakti Janata Dal' ahead of polls

PATNA, 26 SEPT

Tej Pratap Yadav, elder son of Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) President Lalu Prasad Yadav and recently expelled from the party, on Friday announced the formation of a new political outfit, the 'Jan Shakti Janata Dal'. Sharing a poster on X, he declared himself the party's national president and revealed a blackboard as its proposed poll symbol. The former Bihar state minister said the party's core motto is social justice, citizens' rights, and "complete development" of the state. He appealed to young people to join the movement, emphasising that his party is "fully dedicated and committed to a complete transformation of Bihar" and is prepared to "fight a long battle" to build a new system from the ground up. *—PTI*

HC gives notice to Vijay over TVK party flag

CHENNAI, 26 SEPT

The Madras High Court on Friday issued notice to Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) leader Vijay in an appeal filed by Chennai-based trust Thondai Mandala Saandror Dharma Paribalana Sabai. The trust challenged a single judge's order that had refused to restrain TVK from using its party flag. A division bench comprising Justices G Jayachandran and M Sudheer Kumar posted the matter for further hearing in six weeks. The appeal stems from allegations of trade-mark and copyright infringement. Thondai Mandala Saandror Dharma Paribalana Sabai had earlier filed an application arising from a suit, seeking to prevent TVK from using the flag. On 18 August, a single judge declined to grant the restraining order. *—PTI*

M'rashtra to give anganwadi staff Rs 2,000 for Diwali

MUMBAI, 26 SEPT

The Maharashtra government has announced a Diwali gift of Rs 2,000 for anganwadi workers and helpers under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme. Women and Child Development Minister Aditi Tatkare said the state has sanctioned Rs 40.61 crore for the initiative, with a government resolution issued on Thursday. She described the gift as a "Bhau Beej" gesture recognising the dedicated service of workers in the care, nutrition, and overall development of women and children. Tatkare called anganwadi staff a "true strength of our society" and expressed hope that the financial boost would brighten their festive celebrations. The amount will be disbursed soon through the ICDS commissioner. *—PTI*

Gujarat BJP to promote desi goods in houses

GANDHINAGAR, 26 SEPT

The ruling BJP in Gujarat will launch a door-to-door campaign to promote the purchase of indigenous products, Union Minister and party Chief CR Paatil announced. The initiative is part of PM Narendra Modi's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan', running until 25 December. Paatil clarified the campaign aims to raise awareness about 'Made in India' goods rather than boycott other products. Activities will include social media reels, essay competitions, over 1,000 trade fairs, and more than 20,000 workshops to encourage self-reliance. CM Bhupendra Patel urged residents to participate, expressing that it would become a mass movement, boosting India's journey towards becoming a developed nation and supporting local businesses. *—PTI*

PM Modi gifts Bihar Rs 7,500cr scheme

75L women to get Rs 10,000 each for employment

PATNA, 26 SEPT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday launched Bihar's Mukhya Mantri Mahila Rojgar Yojana, and transferred Rs 10,000 each to the bank accounts of 75 lakh women.

The Rs 7,500-crore scheme, an initiative of Bihar's NDA government, is aimed at promoting women's empowerment through self-employment and livelihood opportunities.

Modi launched the scheme virtually from Delhi, which assumed significance ahead of the upcoming assembly polls in the state.

At least one woman from every family will be a beneficiary.

Starting with an initial financial support of Rs 10,000, up to Rs 2 lakh would be provided to the beneficiaries depending on the success of their enterprise.

The PM said that the women of Bihar can now open shops selling groceries, utensils, cosmetics, toys, and stationery and livestock-related businesses s, adding that for these ventures, necessary training will be provided.

Bihar has nearly 11 lakh self-help groups at present.

With the launch of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, a new provision was introduced to ensure that mothers, sisters and daughters are also named as owners of homes, he said.

The PM said that most of the over 50 lakh PM Awas homes in Bihar have, women are listed as co-owners.

The PM also virtually interacted with women, who had joined from different district headquarters in large numbers.

He took a veiled dig at opposition leaders by referring to the politics over 'jalebi' during the Haryana assembly polls last year. *—PTI*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually launches Bihar's Mukhyamantri Mahila Rojgar Yojana via video conferencing from New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

- Starting with an initial financial support of Rs 10,000, up to Rs 2 lakh would be provided to the beneficiaries depending on the success of their enterprise. They can now generate a livelihood.

NDA buys votes with doles, says Priyanka

People must know BJP's intentions, she says

PATNA, 26 SEPT

Senior Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Friday urged women of Bihar not to be swayed by doles offered by the NDA government, alleging that the BJP-led coalition was "interested only in your votes", while her party wanted to give them "respect".

Addressing a 'Mahila Samvad' at state headquarters of the party, the party general secretary asked women to understand the "true intentions" of leaders like Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, "who deserved to be taught a lesson" in the upcoming assem-bly polls.

Referring to the disbursement of Rs 7,500 crore among 75 lakh women under Mukhya Mantri Mahila Rojgar Yojana earlier in the day, the Congress leader said, "Now that elections are round the corner, Rs 10,000 is being offered by the government. But, take note, they are not promising that the dole will continue every month."

When money is being offered just ahead of elections, it betrays a mindset that is interested only in your votes. They cannot understand your need for respect. They will not address your need for safety. I think crimes against women must have risen ten-fold in the last 10 years, she alleged.

"My brother Rahul Gandhi has been fighting for social justice, an essential component of which is uplift of women," she said.

The Congress general secretary also said that the much-talked-about medical insurance scheme of Raja-sthan would be replicated in the eastern state if the INDIA bloc came to power here in the upcoming polls. *—PTI*

Congress General Secretary and MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra addresses a Mahila Samvad event at Sadaqat Ashram, in Patna in Bihar **PHOTO: PTI**

> **The NDA government in the state has been working tirelessly for the overall development of the state. Everyone knows that when Lalu Prasad has cared about his family only, whereas we work for the people of the state.**
>
> – Nitish Kumar, Bihar Chief Minister

2015 CASE

CPI(M) worker murder: 9 BJP-RSS workers acquitted

KANNUR, 26 SEPT

A court in Kerala has acquitted nine BJP-RSS workers in connection with the 2015 murder of CPI(M) activist O Preman. The incident occurred on 25 February, 2015, at Chittariparamba in Kannur; Preman succumbed to his injuries at hospital the following day.

The accused Sajesh C, Prajesh D, Inchikandi Nishanth, Lijin P, Manpaddy Vineesh, C Rajeesh, Nikhil N, R Ramesh, and Renjith CV were cleared of charges. The second accused, Shyam Prasad, was killed in a separate political clash in 2018, defence lawyers stated.

Advocate P Premarajan, representing the accused, explained that the district additional sessions court acquitted them due to "serious lapses" in police investigation. "The FIR was registered only the next day. Six people initially named were later dropped, and the current accused were arraigned instead," he said.

He further stated that the trial proved the accused were not present at the crime scene. The police had initially booked them under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and the Indian Penal Code. They had been granted bail six months after arrest.

The trial, which began in March 2024, involved testimony from 65 witnesses and submission of 135 documents. Defence lawyers PS Easwaran, D Sunilkumar, and Akshay Baburaj represented the accused. *—PTI*

AFSPA extended in parts of Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act was on Friday extended for six months in entire Manipur, except the jurisdiction of 13 police stations, in view of the prevailing law and order situation there.

The AFSPA, under which a particular state or some areas are declared "disturbed", has also been extended to nine districts in Nagaland and 21 police station areas in five other districts of the state, said a notification issued by Union Home Ministry.

The law was also extended to Tirap, Changlang and Longding in Arunachal Pradesh and three police station areas, bordering Assam, in Namsai district. The extension of the disturbed area in the particular areas will be effective from 1 October for six months.

The areas where AFSPA will not be in force in Manipur are: Imphal, Lamphal, City, Singjamei, Patsoi, Wangoi in Imphal West district, Porompat, Heingang, Irilbung in Imphal East district, Thoubal in Thoubal district and Bishnupur and Nambol in Bishnupur district and Kakching in Kakching district. *—PTI*

Wangchuk being treated as 'criminal', says wife

LEH, 26 SEPT

Sonam Wangchuk, the renowned climate activist, education reformer, and founder of the Students' Educa-tional and Cultural Movement of Ladakh, was arrested on Friday in his home village of Ulyaktopo, two days after violent protests in Leh over statehood and constitutional safeguards for the Himalayan region left four people dead and dozens injured.

The Home Ministry accused Wangchuk of making "provocative statements" that allegedly incited the unrest, claims he strongly denies. During the protests, angry crowds torched buildings and police vehicles, clashing with security personnel who opened fire in self-defence. Authorities also suspended mobile internet ser-vices in Leh and imposed a curfew in several areas as a precautionary measure.

Wangchuk's wife, Gitanjali Angmo, co-founder of the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, condemned his arrest, calling it "the worst form of democracy" and alleging that police ransacked their home. She accused the government of spreading "false narratives" to label her husband as anti-national and highlighted his ex-tensive contributions to agriculture, environmental conservation, and education, including global recogni-tion such as the Rolex Awards. Angmo challenged the Centre to a live debate on the charges, warning against the misuse of state power to target an individual.

The protests reflect local frustrations following the 2019 revocation of Ladakh's regional autonomy by the cantral government. There are demands for job quotas for local residents and special status to restore elected local governance, aiming to protect the region's tribal and cultural interests. *—PTI*

The Home Ministry accused Wangchuk of making provocative speeches that incited the unrest in Leh **PHOTO: X**

J&K CM calls Wangchuk's arrest 'unfortunate'

SRINAGAR, 26 SEPT

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday said the arrest of climate activist Soman Wangchuk was unfortunate, and accused the BJP-led NDA government of backtracking on its promises.

Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk was arrested on Friday, two days after violent protests in Ladakh left four people dead and 90 others injured.

It was not immediately clear what charges were pressed against Wangchuk.

The home ministry had blamed Wangchuk, a senior member of Leh Apex Body, for provocation leading to the violence.

He asked whether the people of the state are being kept away from statehood because they didn't elect the BJP to power.

The Congress on Friday said the distress and anguish of the people of Ladakh must awaken the govern-ment's conscience to fulfill their legitimate aspirations in full measure. The Aam Aadmi Party termed Wangchuk's arrest an attack on democracy and people's rights. It took out 'candlelight vigil' at Jantar Mantar in support of the activist. *—PTI*

TN Minister Rajaa says UP depends on TN's tax funds

CHENNAI, 26 SEPT

Tamil Nadu Industries Minister **TRB Rajaa** has asserted that Uttar Pradesh primarily depends on the tax money paid by Tamil Nadu to the Centre, describing it as "living off" state's funds.

Speaking to reporters, Rajaa responded to questions about UP's finances, asking, "From where did UP get money? Is it internal development? We have grown across sectors and TN accounts for 15 per cent of the country's factory workers." He highlighted state's impressive economic growth, noting, "Investments secured are about 11.32 lakh crore rupees. In the last three to four years alone, approximately 35 lakh jobs have been created, according to Central government data, and the economy is booming." He pointed out that while India's national growth rate is 6 to 7 per cent, state has grown at 11.19 per cent. "The funds received by Uttar Pradesh are the largesse of the union government, but in reality, they are Tamil Nadu's funds (tax contributions); UP lives on Tamil Nadu's money, and this is the truth," he said.

He added that for every rupee state pays in taxes, the state receives just 29 paisa in return, with the rest going to states like UP. *—PTI*

'ANTI-BENGALI BJP'

In WB, Shah prays for 'Sonar Bangla' in 2026; TMC fumes

KOLKATA, 26 SEPT

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday prayed before Goddess Durga for a change of guard in West Bengal after the 2026 assembly polls to build a 'Sonar Bangla', drawing a sharp retort from senior TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee, who accused the BJP of being "anti-Bengali" and starving the state of funds.

Inaugurating the Durga Puja pandal of Santosh Mitra Square Sarbojanin Durgotsab Samity in north Kolkata, Shah invoked Rabindranath Tagore's dream of a safe and prosperous Bengal, saying he wished for a government that could deliver that vision..

The senior BJP leader linked his call with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's larger agenda. Shah also inaugurated another puja pandal at the BJP-backed Paschim Banga Sanskriti Mancha in Salt Lake and paid tribute to 19th-century reformer Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar on his 205th birth anniversary.

He also expressed grief over the death of 11 persons in rain in Kolkata

MP Abhishek Banerjee accused the Centre of depriving Bengal of Rs 2 lakh crore in dues and alleged that the BJP had consistently disrespected the state's icons."

He further accused BJP leaders of repeatedly misrepresenting Bengal's history.He also flagged a Calcutta High Court order that set aside the deportation of six Bengali-speaking people. *—PTI*

Union Home Minister Amit Shah offers prayers to Goddess Durga dring inauguration of the Purvi Kshetriya Sanskritk kendra Durga Puja Pandal in Kolkata on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

'Posters removed ahead of Shah's visit'

The West Bengal BJP on Friday lodged a complaint with police that posters welcoming Union Home Minister Amit Shah for his visit to Kalighat temple were removed by unidentified miscreants and replaced with Trinamool Congress banners featuring Mamata Banerjee. BJP activists held posters of Shah to welcome him. , TMC leader Firhad Hakim dismissed the allegations as baseless. *—PTI*

HC grills Wankhede over plea against web series

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

The Delhi High Court on Friday questioned IRS officer and former NCB zonal director Sameer Wankhede over the maintainability of his defamation suit against actor Shahrukh Khan, his wife Gauri Khan-owned Red Chillies Entertainment, and Netflix for allegedly maligning his reputation in their series The Ba**ds of Bollywood*.Justice Purushaindra Kumar Kaurav said the plaint was not maintainable in Delhi, noting it could be considered only if maximum damage occurred there. Wankhede's lawyer, senior advocate Sandeep Sethi, argued the series aired in Delhi and assured the court of an amended plaint. The plea said the content outraged national sentiment through use of offensive material. The court granted time for filing amendments. *—PTI*

HC orders status quo on content on Adani

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

The Delhi High Court on Friday ordered status quo on the removal of social media posts on Adani Group of Companies by journalist Ravish Kumar and digital news platform Newslaundry. Justice Sachin Datta noted Adani Enterprises' submission that it will not seek the removal of any further content existing on sites or intermediaries as of 12 noon, September 26. ".....agreed that material already taken down shall not be re-uploaded," the judge said, adding the order will continue until trial. The government had also communicated to the journalists and organisations the court directions. The court disposed of pleas challenging the Centre's direction to remove multiple reports and videos. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

J'khand Durga Puja pandal on Vatican angers VHP

RANCHI, 26 SEPT

A Durga Puja marquee in Ranchi themed on "Vatican City" has sparked protests from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), which accuses the organisers of "hurting Hindu sentiments" and "promoting religious conversion". VHP spokesperson Vinod Bansal said Christian symbols were placed at the entrance and inside the pandal, and urged their removal, warning of a "strong decision" by its Jharkhand unit. Organiser Vicky Yadav, president of RR Sporting Club, dismissed the claims, saying the pandal replicates Sreebhumi Sporting Club's 2022 Vatican-themed display in Kolkata. Artisans from Kolkata recreated St Peter's Basilica and the Vatican Museum as the backdrop for Goddess Durga. Yadav insisted the puja follows Vedic rituals and offended no one. *—PTI*

UP man held for throwing acid on teacher's face

SAMBHAL, 26 SEPT

Police in Uttar Pradesh have arrested a 30-year-old man accused of throwing acid on a young teacher in Amroha district. The suspect, Nishu Tiwari of Tigri village in the Gajraula area, allegedly attacked the 22-year-old woman near Dehpa village on 23 September as she was returning from school, leaving her with 20–30 per cent burns to her face. She is receiving treatment at the district hospital. When the police tried to stop Tiwari near Kalyanpur village on 25 September, he opened fire. Police shot him in both legs before arresting him. A pistol, two cartridges and the scooter used in the crime were seized, and a probe was being conducted by the police. *—PTI*

SC clears JSW's Rs 19,700cr takeover of Bhushan Steel

JSW converted ailing company into profitable one, says SC

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

The Supreme Court on Friday upheld JSW Steel's Rs 19,700-crore resolution plan for debt-ridden Bhushan Power and Steel Limited (BPSL), ending a prolonged legal battle of nearly eight years.

The court upheld the verdict of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), which had allowed JSW Steel to acquire BPSL by providing it immunity from prosecution by the Enforcement Directorate.

The court had reserved its verdict on appeals filed by the former promoters and operational creditors of BPSL challenging the JSW Steel resolution plan.

On 31 July, the court recalled the earlier verdict that had ordered liquidation of BPSL while setting aside a resolution plan of JSW Steel Limited for the ailing firm.

The verdict was critical of the conduct of all key stakeholders in the resolution process, the resolution professional, the Committee of Creditors (CoC) and the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) for enabling what it termed a "flagrant violation" of the IBC.

The SC recalled its earlier verdict ordering liquidation of BPSL challenging the JSW Steel resolution plan *PHOTO: JSW GROUP*

The CoC sought Rs 3,569 crore in EBITDA and Rs 2,500 crore in delay-related interest.

The court said the resolution applicants submitted their bids and the request for resolution plan does not provide for treatment of EBITDA.

It said JSW invested huge amounts in modernisation and expansion of corporate debtors.

If, after the implementation of the resolution plan, the JSW has converted a loss-making entity into the one making profits, can it be penalised for that, the verdict asked.BPSL was among the 12 large corporate defaulters, often referred to as the RBI's "dirty dozen" as identified in June 2017 for insolvency resolution. Rs 47,000 crore claims from financial creditors were admitted. --- —

SC junks plea on ban on Rushdie's book

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

The Supreme Court has dismissed a plea seeking to ban Salman Rushdie's controversial novel "The Satanic Verses". The matter was brought before a bench comprising Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta on Friday.

During the hearing, the petitioners' counsel referenced a November ruling from the Delhi High Court, which had closed proceedings on a petition challenging the 1988 ban on the book's import by the Rajiv Gandhi government. The High Court stated that, as the authorities failed to present the relevant notification, it must be assumed that it does not exist."

You are effectively challenging the judgement of the Delhi High Court," the court noted in the case. *—PTI*

People wade through water after a heavy downpour in Hyderabad in Telangana on Friday *PHOTO: PTI*

Rains cripple T'gana; Yellow alert in Kerala

HYDERABAD/T'PURAM, 26 SEPT

Heavy rains disrupted normal life in Telangana and Kerala on Friday, leading to waterlogging and traffic snarls at various places.

Rains in Telangana's Hyderabad caused waterlogging and traffic issues, especially for commuters.

Office goers faced a harrowing ordeal as roads in the state capital were paralysed by severe waterlogging.

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy directed the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation and other civic agencies to swiftly address the issues.

The Cyberabad police issued an advisory to IT firms to consider work from home option for their employees.

Meanwhile, rains lashed parts of central and south Kerala, bring life to a halt. All schools and colleges in Thiruvananthapuram were closed for the day.

A yellow alert was sounded in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Idukki, and Ernakulam districts.

Authorities asked people in these districts to exercise caution and avoid moving out unless absolutely necessary.

On the other hand, Andhra Pradesh Home Minister V Anitha directed officials to remain "fully prepared" as a deep depression over the Bay of Bengal approached the state. The depression is likely to cross the south Odisha–north Andhra coasts on Saturday morning, bringing extremely heavy rainfall at isolated places. Moderate to heavy rain was forecast in Eluru, Krishna, NTR, Guntur, Bapatla, Palnadu, Prakasam, Nellore, Godavari districts, Kurnool and Nandyal. *—PTI*

M'rashtra farmers to get Rs 1,500 cr aid

C'SAMBHAJINAGAR, 26 SEPT

The Maharashtra government has allotted Rs 1,500 crore for disbursal of aid to farmers, who suffered crop losses due to heavy rains between May and August this year in the Marathwada region, comprising of eight districts. Heavy rains caused large-scale damage and claimed 86 lives. Floods destroyed crops on lakhs of acres in the region. Financial assistance to the families of the deceased. *—PTI*

Delhi riots: Tahir denied bail

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

While denying bail to former AAP councillor Tahir Hussain in the murder case of IB staffer Ankit Sharma during February 2020 riots, the Delhi High Court order has highlighted the "extremely grave" allegations against him.

The court said the incident was not merely an "ancillary crime, but a gruesome manifestation" of a larger conspiracy.

The verdict prima facie found Hussain not only a "passive participant" but a "key figure" in the events.

The prosecution alleged that Sharma's body with 51 injuries was recovered from Khajuri Khas nala.

It was Hussain's fifth bail application filed in the case and has been in judicial custody since March 16, 2020.

Four other accused were also stated to be the part of the violent mob which was involved in the acts of rioting and arson, which killed Sharma.

Tahir Hussain *PHOTO: PTI*

The court said the conspiracy involved escalating the anti-CAA/NRC protests into chakka-jams and violent riots.

Hussain's house was used as a "fort" and an operational base to attack members of the Hindu community. *—PTI*

NIA chargesheets Maoists duo in BJP leader's murder

RAIPUR, 26 SEPT

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed a supplementary chargesheet against two Maoist operatives in the 2023 murder case of BJP leader Ratan Dubey.

The chargesheet invokes provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and was submitted before the special NIA court at Jagdalpur on Thursday, an official said on Friday.

Shivanand Nag and his father Narayan Prasad have been charged under various sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the UAPA, the agency said. Sources confirmed their arrest but did not provide details.

The Nags were found actively involved in the conspiracy behind Dubey's killing. According to the NIA, they were operatives of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) and had political, business, and personal rivalry with Dubey.

The BJP leader, then Narayanpur district unit vice president, was hacked to death in a crowded market in Koushalnar village in November 2023.

The NIA has filed one main and two supplementary chargesheets. *—PTI*

WB school jobs scam: Cal HC grants bail to ex-minister Partha

KOLKATA, 26 SEPT

The Calcutta High Court has granted bail to former West Bengal minister Partha Chatterjee, the prime accused in a lucrative cash-for-jobs scam linked to teacher recruitment irregularities. Chatterjee has spent over three years in jail, facing multiple charges from the CBI related to the scam, which reportedly involves several thousand crores.

On 26 September, Justice Suvra Ghosh ordered Chatterjee to surrender his passport and prohibited him from leaving the jurisdiction of the trial court. "He shall not be appointed to any public office during the pendency of the trial," she added.

Despite the bail order, legal experts doubt Chatterjee will be released before the Durga Puja festival, as related court formalities may only be completed after the puja vacations.

The court ordered Partha Chatterjee to surrender his passport, prohibiting him from leaving the jurisdiction of the trial court *PHOTO: PTI*

The Supreme Court ruling also granted him bail but stipulated that he could only be released after the trial court records witness statements. The CBI's investigation has revealed significant illegal appointments in the state's education sector, leading to multiple high-profile arrests in the state. *—PTI*

Court dismisses godman's bail plea in forgery case

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

A Delhi court on Friday dismissed the anticipatory bail plea of self-styled godman Chaitanyananda Saraswati in an alleged cheating, forgery and criminal conspiracy case against him.

"Considering the seriousness of allegations and gravity of offence, this Court is not inclined to grant anticipatory bail to the applicant/ accused. Therefore, the present bail application stands dismissed," the judge said.

The FIR in the case has been registered for the offences of cheating by personation, cheating by dishonestly inducing a person to deliver property or consent to its retention, forgery, forged document or electronic record and using it as genuine, criminal conspiracy and criminal breach of trust.

The self-styled godman was also booked for allegedly sexually harassing 17 female students of a private management institute here.

Chaitanyananda allegedly tightened his control over the institute by sub-letting the properties of Jagadguru Shankaracharya Mahasam sthanam Dakshinamnaya Sri Sharada Peetham, which runs it, to private companies for financial gains.

He reportedly used the proceeds to purchase high-end luxury cars that also had UN number plates. *—PTI*

Zubin death: Witnesses summoned

GUWAHATI, 26 SEPT

The Assam Police's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has issued notices to individuals present or aware of the events leading to singer Zubeen Garg's death in Singapore, requesting them to appear and give statements within 10 days, according to a senior officer. The Special Investigating Team (SIT), led by Special DGP MP Gupta, continued its searches at North East India Festival organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta's residence in Guwahati for the second day. Residences of Garg's manager Siddhartha Sharma and musician Shekhar Jyoti Goswami, both present at the drowning incident on a yacht on 19 September, were also searched. Non-resident Assamese in Singapore have been brought under the probe's ambit. Investigation iare underway. *—PTI*

UP schoolboy held for killing e-rickshaw driver

GONDA, 26 SEPT

It was a textbook blind murder with scarce clues, no witnesses and no apparent motive. Investigators, who had literally nothing to go by when called upon to solve the killing of an e-rickshaw driver, eventually traced it to a schoolboy.

A month later, police apprehended a Class 11 student who strangled Sangam Lal, 50, to death in isolated woods.

Lal allegedly forced the boy to perform "unnatural acts" when he had come alone to offer prayers in Ayodhya from Jhansi.

The incident occurred on 27 August in Nawabganj, Gonda. Sangam Lal's body was found lying in thick undergrowth.

Lal had gone missing the previous night while at work in Ayodhya. His family alerted the police, who rushed to the scene and conducted a thorough examination.

The post-mortem confirmed

that he had been strangled, and the victim's personal belongings were found discarded in nearby bushes. The circumstances showing no apparent robbery, no prior threats, and no personal feud left investigators grappling with minimal leads.

To solve the case, police formed three specialised teams. Manual and technical evidence were collated, and leads were cross-verified to narrow down the suspect.

The accused was ptoduced before the Juvenile Justice Board. Whether he had any accomplices in executing the act was being probed. *—PTI*

NOT FOREIGNERS

Cal HC calls deportation of West Bengal residents illegal

KOLKATA, 26 SEPT

Calcutta High Court on Friday set aside the Centre's decision to deport two women and their families from West Bengal's Birbhum district to Bangladesh, after terming them "illegal immigrants".

The court directed the Centre to ensure that Sonali Bibi, Sweety Bibi and four other deported family members, including three children, are brought back to India within a month.

The high court also rejected the Centre's appeal to grant a temporary stay on the order.

The court passed the order in connection with a habeas corpus petition filed by Bhodu Sheikh, who claimed that her nine-month- pregnant daughter Sonali, her husband, Danesh Sheikhand son hailing from Murarai in Birbhum, were detained in Delhi and deported to Bangladesh.

Another petition from the same Birbhum neighbourhood by Amir Khan made a similar claim.

The petitioners alleged that the families, working as daily wage earners in Delhi for over two decades, were picked up by the police and pushed across the border on June 27. They were arrested by the Bangladesh police.

Counsels representing both

The petitioners claimed that their family members were deported despite having produced necessary documents before the authorities *PHOTO: PTI*

- The court said in respect of Bangladesh/Myanmar nationals identified to be staying in an unauthorised manner in any state or union territory, an inquiry will be conducted by the state goverentment.

families that the suspects had provided necessary citizenship documents before the authorities concerned.

The Centre, had claimed that the Calcutta High Court has no jurisdiction in the matter since the person who was stated to have been deported was detained in Delhi.

The court said in respect of Bangladesh/Myanmar nationals identified to be staying in an unauthorised manner in any particular state or union territory, an inquiry will be conducted by the state government or union territory concerned, following which the process of deportation would be taken up.

Trinamool Congress MP Samirul Islam accused the BJP of resorting to lies to push its "anti-Bengali agenda". *—PTI*

ENGRAVED IN BOOKS

Congress Chief Sonia Gandhi on Friday inaugurated a library named after former prime minister Manmohan Singh in the Congress headquarters, in the presence of Singh's wife Gursharan Kaur and other members of the family, as well as party president Mallikarjun Kharge and former party chief Rahul Gandhi. The library houses about 1,200 books, which encapsulate the journey of the country and the Congress. Sections dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Indira Gandhi, multiple volumes of "The Encyclopedia of the Congress", as well as the party's poll manifestoes, are part of the library
PHOTO: PTI

Disasters ravage 605 lakh hectares of M'rashtra farms

People make their way through a flooded area, in Solapur district, on Wednesday; Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde inspects the areas affected by heavy rainfall in Dharashiv district, in Maharashtra
PHOTO: PTI

Maharashtra has lost crops on more than 605 lakh hectares of farmland to heavy rains, hailstorms and droughts in the past nine years with more than Rs 54,600 crore being paid as compensation to the affected farmers, according to government data.

The state has witnessed a significant rise in excessive rainfall since 2019, with the current kharif season already recording severe losses, said an official from the state agriculture department on Thursday.

"The cumulative figure of loss of crops on agricultural land is 605.26 lakh hectares. It is also true that some areas or villages have been hit multiple times in the last nine years. The total assistance paid to farmers over the past nine years amounts to Rs 54,679.17 crore," said an official from the agriculture department.

According to the data reviewed after the recent spell of torrential rains in Marathwada, every year, barring the 2016-17 kharif season, has seen farmers facing some form of natural disaster.

In 2015-16, unseasonal rains and two episodes of hailstorms, coupled with drought conditions, destroyed crops on 56.50 lakh hectares. Drought accounted for the most damage, and 21 districts were severely affected, the official said.

Two spells of unseasonal rains and hailstorms damaged crops on 6.85 lakh hectares in the next financial year.

In the fiscal 2017-18, between March and October, unseasonal rains and hailstorms hit several districts, with seven districts suffering the most. In the same year, crops on 44.43 lakh hectares were damaged, according to the data compiled by the agriculture department.

Multiple disasters struck in 2018-19. In February, hailstorms and heavy rains destroyed crops on 2.91 lakh hectares across 19 districts, while unseasonal rains in April-May affected 70,000 hectares. Drought in 26 districts caused losses on 85.76 lakh hectares.

Excessive rains in June that year across 13 districts damaged 1.87 lakh hectares, with floods affecting Sangli and Kolhapur districts. In Jalgaon district, storms and rain destroyed banana plantations on 8,000 hectares within 21 days, the official said.

The state faced cyclones Kyarr and Maha, along with unseasonal showers and excessive rainfall in 2019-20. Cyclonic storms alone damaged crops and orchards on 96.57 lakh hectares, while drought in Ambejogai (Beed) and Dharashiv ruined 1 lakh hectares. Between October and November, unseasonal rains, cyclones and downpours destroyed another 94.53 lakh hectares.

In 2021, excessive rains during monsoon months and floods damaged 41.85 lakh hectares in 34 districts. Between February and June, unseasonal rains, hailstorms and strong winds destroyed 3.79 lakh hectares. In the Nagpur division, floods on August 30-31 and September 1 hit six districts, damaging crops on 1.02 lakh hectares.

Hailstorms, rains and gales in December 2020 and February 2021 damaged 47,000 hectares of crops, while March-May and December saw 2.68 lakh hectares destroyed. July floods ruined 4.43 lakh hectares, August-September floods affected 48.38 lakh hectares, and excessive rains and winds in October damaged 2.07 lakh hectares.

The trend since 2019 shows that excessive rainfall has caused major farm losses. In June-August 2019, 13 districts were hit, while 34 districts faced crop losses in October-November.

In 2020, excessive rains and floods battered 34 districts between June and October. In 2021, July-September floods and rains affected 52.81 lakh hectares across 53 districts. September-October of that year saw 32.79 lakh hectares hit in 34 districts.

Drought in 15 districts damaged 22.66 lakh hectares in 2023, while excessive rains from March to December across 34 districts affected 29.50 lakh hectares. Various weather phenomena damaged 51.53 lakh hectares in 2024, said officials.

Government records show disbursal of Rs 4,190.62 crore in compensation in 2015-16, followed by Rs 602.83 crore next year, Rs 3,622.50 crore (2017-18), Rs 6,218.34 crore (2018-19), Rs 7,754.06 crore (2019–20), Rs 4,923.78 crore in (2020–21), Rs 5,647.44 crore in (2021–22), Rs 8,637.44 crore (2022–23), Rs 6,421.63 crore (2023–24), and Rs 6,660.51 crore last fiscal. *—PTI*

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

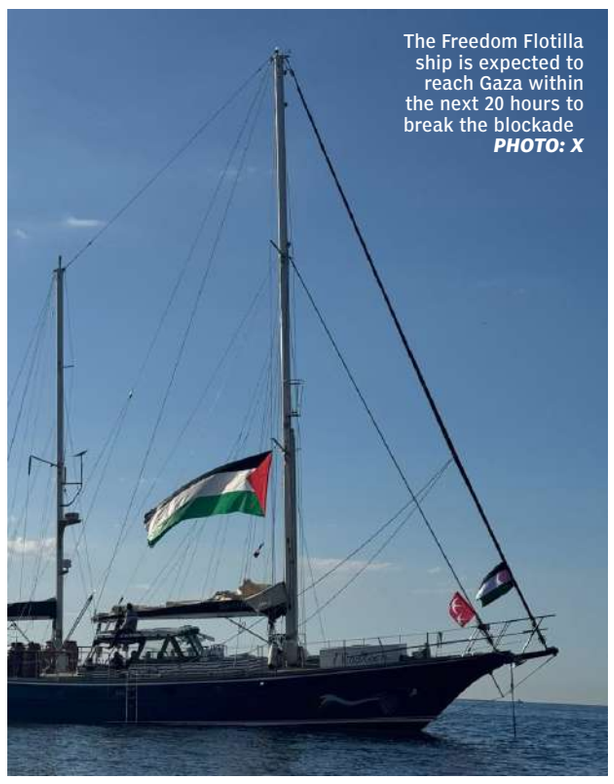
SALAR سالار

Israel's blockade-busting flotilla heads to Gaza

Spain and Italy say they are sending navy ships to where a flotilla of boats carrying activists seeking to break Israel's blockade of Gaza is sailing, after the activists said they were attacked by drones near Greece.

The Global Sumud Flotilla said on Friday it was preparing to set sail on the final leg to Gaza after being targeted by drones and communications jamming, with several explosions occurring on or near some of the boats. Some of the vessels were damaged, but no injuries were reported.

Here's what to know about the flotilla.



The Freedom Flotilla ship is expected to reach Gaza within the next 20 hours to break the blockade
PHOTO: X

THE FLOTILLA'S GOAL

Organisers say the flotilla includes 52 mostly small vessels carrying activists from dozens of countries. They are carrying a symbolic amount of humanitarian aid, mainly food and medicine, for Palestinians in the besieged enclave of Gaza.

The 23-month war has led to a humanitarian catastrophe in the territory that has seen much of it reduced to rubble. The world's leading authority on the food crisis has declared famine in Gaza's largest city.

They say the flotilla is the largest attempt to date to break Israel's maritime blockade of the Gaza Strip, which has now lasted 18 years, long predating the current war in Gaza.

Israel says the blockade is needed to prevent Hamas from importing arms, while critics consider it collective punishment.

THE BOATS' JOURNEY

The core vessels set sail from Spain on 1 September, heading east across the Mediterranean Sea, and have been joined by boats from other countries along the way.

The flotilla includes larger vessels that are providing support and provisions for smaller boats.

Participants include high-profile activists such as Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg and former Barcelona Mayor Ada Colau, as well as members of Italy's parliament and the European parliament.

Organisers say delegates from 46 countries had committed to participating, with activists including military veterans, doctors, clergy and lawyers.

The bulk of the flotilla was sailing south of the Greek island of Crete on Thursday, heading eastwards. Organisers said they expected to reach the Gaza area within a week.

DRONE ATTACKS

Organisers have reported at least three separate instances of participating boats being targeted by drones: twice in Tunisia on 8 and 9 September, and once while sailing south of Greece in the early hours of Wednesday.

In the latest attack, the flotilla said it was targeted during the night by "unidentified drones and communications jamming." Activists said "at least 13 explosions" were heard on and around several flotilla boats, while drones or aircraft dropped "unidentified objects" on at least 10 boats.

ISRAEL VOWS TO BLOCK THE BOATS

Israel said Thursday it had no problem with Italy and Spain's plan to send rescue ships to accompany the flotilla but renewed strong criticism of the aid initiative — warning that the boats would not be allowed to reach Gaza.

Bar Tal warned the activists against attempting to reach Gaza. "Any further refusal will put the responsibility on the flotilla organisers," he said, without elaborating.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to questions regarding Wednesday's drone attack.

SPAIN, ITALY READY NAVY SHIPS

Italy and Spain said they were sending military ships to provide assistance and possible rescues if needed.

Spanish officials said a navy offshore patrol vessel, the Furor, was being prepared to sail from the Mediterranean port of Cartagena.

Italian Defense Minister Guido Crosetto condemned the drone attack on civilian boats as "totally unacceptable" during a parliamentary address Thursday. A day after Premier Giorgia Meloni delivered one of her toughest criticisms of Israel's actions in Gaza at the UN General Assembly, Italy was sending an Italian navy ship ready to assist the flotilla if needed.

Cypriot deputy government spokesman Yiannis Antoniou said Israel had stated its willingness to accept the aid from Cyprus. Flotilla organisers rejected the Cyprus proposal and vowed to continue on to Gaza.

EU WARNS AGAINST USE OF FORCE

In Athens, activists staged a protest outside the foreign ministry, urging the government to condemn the drone attacks, provide naval protection to the flotilla, and join other European nations in formally recognising Palestinian statehood.

UN Human Rights Office spokesperson Thameen Al-Kheetan called for an investigation, while the European Union also warned against the use of any force.

PAST ATTEMPTS TO BREAK BLOCKADE

It is not the first time activists trying to break Israel's Gaza blockade have come under attack.

Another vessel said it was attacked by drones in May in international waters off Malta. An overland convoy travelling across North Africa also attempted to reach the border but was blocked by security forces aligned with Egypt in eastern Libya. *—PTI*

Pilots & their flying machines: MiG-21 prepares to fly one last time

The Indian Air Force's MiG-21, the country's first supersonic fighter and interceptor aircraft, whose induction in the early 1960s catapulted the force into the jet age, will roar in the Indian skies for one last time on Friday, leaving an enduring legacy and countless stories in its illustrious trail.

But more than anyone else, the pilots who have flown these Soviet-era machines over the decades will bid this workhorse of the Indian Air Force (IAF) a nostalgic farewell.

Veteran pilot and former IAF chief, Air Chief Marshal A Y Tipnis (retd) says the MiG-21 "taught us how to be innovative and produce results".

In a recorded video podcast shared by the IAF on X a day ahead of the high-profile decommissioning ceremony in Chandigarh, he recalled some of the challenges that he and other pilots who flew the MiG-21 aircraft faced when it was inducted.

Tipnis began as a fighter pilot in 1960, and, early on he became part of MiG-21 squadrons. In July 1977, he took over as the Commanding Officer of No. 23 Squadron equipped with MiG-21 Bis aircraft, according to the IAF website.

"When the MiG-21 came to us, the first type that came to us was the Type-74, there were no trainers at that time. The first solo was on MiG-21 itself. Difficulty was that not only there was no trainer, no simulator, but also in the entire cockpit, nothing was written in English, it was all in Russian," he recalls with a whiff of nostalgia.

The veteran air warrior said the speed measurement unit for them also suddenly changed from "knots to km/hr" and it too was a challenge as pilots were "used to knots".

"So, in the first solo, you are mostly lost, until you came back, and didn't know how to manage it," he said.

The former top IAF officer, who served as the Chief of the Air Staff from December 1998 to December 2001, also shared that "in MiG-21, we were all flying in spacesuits, believe it or not".

Astronaut Yuri Gagarin, when he went up in space, had the same pressure suit and pressure helmet for the first solo, he said, recalling, "We could hardly move our neck from one side to another."

According to the tentative programme for the decommissioning event, Tipnis is among the six former IAF chiefs, others being S Krishnaswamy, SP Tyagi, PV Naik, BS Dhanoa and RKS Bhadauria, who will also attend Friday's ceremony in Chandigarh, where the iconic aircraft was first inducted over six decades ago.

The pilots who have flown these Soviet-era machines over the decades will bid this workhorse of the Indian Air Force a nostalgic farewell
PHOTO: X @DEF_PRO_CHENNAI

Having been part of the major share of the aircraft in IAF's inventory for a long time, several of these Russian-origin fighter jets have been involved in crashes and resulting loss of lives in the past, prompting some to describe these legacy platforms as 'flying coffins'.

A former IAF pilot, who did not wish to be named, said the use of phrases like 'flying coffin' by a section of people to describe any aircraft linked with accidents is not appropriate.

The veteran air warrior also underlined that MiG-21 took part in wars in 1965 and 1971, and the 1999 Kargil conflict, as well as the 2019 Balakot strike.

In 1999, as the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Tipnis oversaw Operation Safed Sagar, the IAF's critical campaign during the conflict.

And, as the IAF gears up for Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-21's swansong, the veterans and current air warriors agree that these were jets that "defined generations of pilots".

- Veteran pilot and former IAF chief, Air Chief Marshal A Y Tipnis (retd) says the MiG-21 "taught us how to be innovative and produce results".

Tipnis says IAF pilots used their agility with adaptability, because it was built for higher altitude flying, "but, we started using it for strike purposes, and I think, it speaks tremendously for the IAF".

Air Commodore Nitin Sathe (retd) in the podcast says, for over six decades, the MiG-21 has been a "backbone of the IAF", and "an icon, a trusted companion in war and peace, and a proving ground for generations of fighter pilots".

The last of the MiG-21 jets, belonging to Squadron No. 23 and nicknamed "Panthers", will be given a farewell at the ceremony to be held at the Chandigarh Air Force station.

As part of the symbolic farewell, IAF Chief Air Chief Marshal A P Singh flew solo sorties of the MiG-21 from Nal air base on August 18-19, marking an emotional moment for the force and for generations of pilots trained on the Russian-origin fighter jet that served the force for 62 years.

Grp Capt Nanda Rajender, Commanding Officer of Squadron No. 23, who has flown MiG-21 and MiG-21 Bison aircraft, says, "From being the most advanced fighter in the 1965 war and 1971 war, it has been in the vanguard of all military actions by India. Even during Operation Sindoor, it was a legacy fighter, however, it was tasked for ORP (Operational Readiness Platform) duties, and we were ready to defend the skies if the demand was raised."

In the podcast, Air Commodore Sathe (retd) quoted the late veteran air warrior P C Lal, later IAF chief, who had said, "The MiG-21 gave the IAF wings, it never had before."

And, on Friday, the last of these machines, carrying the weight of history on their wings, will fly into the sunset. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Trump indicts ex-FBI head for lying to Congress

WASHINGTON, 26 SEPT

Former FBI director James Comey has been indicted on charges of lying to Congress and obstructing a congressional proceeding, marking the first prosecution of a high-ranking official linked to the Trump-era investigation into Russian election interference. The indictment follows President Donald Trump's public calls for Comey's prosecution and was filed by the newly appointed US Attorney Lindsey Halligan. The two-count indictment accuses Comey of making a false statement regarding leaks to the Senate and obstructing Congress by failing to recall information tied to a purported Clinton campaign plan to link Trump to Russia. Trump celebrated the indictment, declaring it "JUSTICE FOR AMERICA!" Comey however claimed innocence. *—PTI*

'Illegal' Indian held over Cali lorry crash

WASHINGTON, 26 SEPT

An Indian national, Partap Singh, who entered the US illegally in 2022, has been arrested for causing a multi-vehicle crash in California last year. Singh was detained by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) last month over the June 2024 collision, when he was driving an 18-wheeler lorry. The crash left five-year-old Dalilah Coleman with severe, life-changing injuries, including cerebral palsy and skull fractures, after being in a coma for three weeks. Officials said Singh had been speeding and failed to halt in a construction zone. DHS Secretary Kristi Noem called the incident preventable, criticising California authorities for granting Singh a commercial licence despite his illegal status. He is in ICE custody. *—PTI*

9/11 Indian-origin doctor sentenced for fraud

WASHINGTON, 26 SEPT

Neil K Anand, a 48-year-old Indian-origin doctor, has been sentenced to 14 years in prison for committing healthcare fraud in the US. This year, the Pennsylvania physician was found guilty of administering unnecessary sedatives to patients to defraud insurance companies, racking up at least $2.4 million in false claims. He was ordered to pay over $2 million in restitution and another $2 million in forfeiture. The US Department of Justice said Anand orchestrated conspiracies involving healthcare fraud, wire fraud and unlawful distribution of controlled substances. He manipulated patients into accepting "Goody Bags" of medications and prescribed 20,000 oxycodone tablets. *—Agencies*

Hong Kong bans substandard, tiny apartments

HONG KONG, 26 SEPT

The lawmakers of Hong Kong have passed a bill mandating minimum size and basic standards for the city's notoriously small subdivided flats. The move aims to eliminate substandard living conditions faced by approximately 220,000 residents, including young professionals and low-income workers. The law requires flats to measure at least eight square metres and include an enclosed toilet area and an openable window. Landlords failing to comply face fines up to HK$300,000 and three years' imprisonment. Housing Secretary Winnie Ho said current conditions were unacceptable, aligning the crackdown with Beijing's demand to phase out poor housing by 2049. However, low-income tenants fear the rules could trigger rent hikes and reduce housing supply. *—PTI*

Trump meets Pak's Sharif, Munir at White House

They discuss bilateral relations in the closed door meeting

NEW YORK/ISLAMABAD, 26 SEPT

US President Donald Trump met with "great leader" Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir at the White House to discuss bilateral ties.

"In fact, we have a great leader coming, the Prime Minister of Pakistan coming, and the Field Marshal (of) Pakistan. Field Marshal is a very great guy and so is the Prime Minister, both. And they're coming," Trump said before the meeting.

The meeting was held at the Oval Office in Washington DC, where Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio were also present, according to a statement by the Pakistan Prime Minister's Office (PMO), which added that it was held in a "pleasant atmosphere". Munir earlier in the summer dined at the White House.

The meeting was closed to the press. It was delayed by about 30 minutes due to Trump's engagements. It continued for approximately one hour and 20 minutes.

Post-meeting photos showed both Sharif and Munir exchanging views with Trump. Trump was also all smiles as he flashed his signature thumbs up sign during a group photo.

This was the first formal bilateral interaction between Trump and Sharif, coming six years after former premier Imran Khan met Trump during the latter's first term in July 2019.

Earlier, Radio Pakistan reported that the two were "expected to discuss matters of mutual interest as well as regional and global situation".

Sharif is in the US for the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly and will address the General Debate from the UNGA podium on Friday.

In his remarks to reporters after signing the executive orders, Trump again said that he has stopped seven wars, including an India-Pakistan conflict. *—PTI*

President Donald Trump with Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir at the White House **PHOTO: PTI**

ERDOGAN KNOWS ABOUT RIGGED ELECTIONS: TRUMP

Trump hosted Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the White House on Thursday, the latter's first visit to since 2019. During the meeting, Trump went off on a tangent about elections and pointed to Erdogan and said "he knows better than anyone about rigged elections," a reference to the state of Turkey's democracy. The two also discussed, the Russia-Ukraine war, NATO, the possible lifting of the US ban on F-35 fighter jet sales to Turkey and trade deals. Turkey also announced it would buy 225 Boeing aircrafts.

Trump closes TikTok deal, says Xi approved it

WASHINGTON, 26 SEPT

President Donald Trump signed an executive order that he says will allow TikTok to continue operating in the US in a way that meets national security concerns.

Former president Joe Biden signed legislation last year calling for China's ByteDance to sell TikTok's assets to an American company by early this year or face a nationwide ban. However, Trump had repeatedly signed orders that have allowed TikTok to keep operating in the US.

Although much is still unknown about the actual deal in the works, the White House signalled that the app will be spun off into a new US joint venture owned by a consortium of American investors — including Oracle and investment firm Silver Lake Partners. Trump said on Thursday that Chinese leader Xi Jinping has approved of the deal.

Though the details have yet to be finalised, the investment group's total stake in the new venture would be around 80 per cent, while ByteDance is expected to have a 20 per cent, or smaller, stake.

TikTok's new owners include many whose business or political interests are tied to Trump, including Oracle co-founder Larry Ellison and media mogul Rupert Murdoch. *—PTI*

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu holds up a map of Gaza titled 'THE CURSE' at the 80th session of the United Nations on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

Booed at UN, Bibi says Israel 'must finish Hamas'

UNITED NATIONS, 26 SEPT

> **I will not allow Israel to annex the West Bank.... It's not going to happen.... It's been enough. It's time to stop now.**
>
> —Donald Trump, US President

Encircled by critics and protesters at the United Nations, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told fellow world leaders on Friday that Israel "must finish the job" against Hamas in Gaza, giving a defiant speech despite growing international isolation over his refusal to end the devastating war in Gaza.

"Western leaders may have buckled under the pressure," he said. "And I guarantee you one thing: Israel won't."

He spoke after dozens of delegates walked out of the UN General Assembly hall en masse Friday as he began speaking.

Responding to countries' recent decisions to recognise Palestinian statehood, Netanyahu said: "Your disgraceful decision will encourage terrorism against Jews and against innocent people."

As he spoke, unintelligible shouts echoed around the hall. Applause rang out in other quarters. The US delegation, which has backed Netanyahu, stayed put. The few world powers in attendance, the US and the UK, did not send their most senior officials but junior, low-level diplomats.

"Anti-semitism dies hard. In fact, it doesn't die at all," Netanyahu said while accusing his critics of antisemitism.

As he has often in the past at the UN, Netanyahu held up a a map of the region titled "THE CURSE." He ascended the podium wearing a hostages pin with a QR code that leads to a site about 7 October that was established for international public diplomacy needs.

Netanyahu also frequently praised President Donald Trump, his chief ally.

Meanwhile, the military set up loudspeakers at the Israel-Gaza border to blast his words. The Israeli army claimed to take mobile phones of Gazans and Hamas operatives to broadcast the speech. *—PTI*

PHILIPPINES FLOODED

Philippines residents and their dogs are evacuated by rescuers as floodwater rises due to Typhoon Bualoi in Ormoc, Leyte province. At least four people died on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

IRAQ TO RESUME OIL EXPORTS FROM KURDISH REGION AFTER 2 YEARS

BAGHDAD, 26 SEPT

Iraq will resume exporting oil from the country's northern, semi-autonomous Kurdish region through Turkey's Ceyhan port after exports had been halted for more than two years, officials said Friday.

The resumption, which starts on Saturday, is a step toward boosting Iraq's oil revenues and stabilising the relationship between the central government in Baghdad and the Kurdish region, even as disputes over revenue sharing and field management persist.

The exports stopped in early 2023 after the International Chamber of Commerce sided with Iraq in an arbitration case over the independent export of oil by the Kurdish regional government. Several previous attempts to reach a deal to resume exports fell through.

In 2014, the Kurdish region decided to export oil through an independent pipeline to the Turkish port of Ceyhan. Iraq's central authorities have maintained it's illegal for the Kurdish region to export oil without going through the Iraqi national oil company, while Kurdish authorities said the practice was meant to compensate for budget transfers withheld from the Kurdish region by Baghdad. *—PTI*

Russia plans closed fuel cycle nuke system

MOSCOW, 26 SEPT

Russia will launch by 2030 the world's first nuclear power system with a closed fuel cycle, which will reuse spent fuel several times, President Vladimir Putin announced on Thursday.

Putin made the announcement at the World Atomic Week international forum in Moscow to mark the 80th anniversary of the country's nuclear industry, gathering several world leaders including International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi.

In his televised speech, Putin said that virtually the entire volume — 95 per cent — of spent fuel will be reused in reactors multiple times.

"Such a mechanism will ultimately make it possible to almost completely resolve the problem of radioactive waste accumulation. And, what's also crucial, it will essentially eliminate the issue of uranium supply," he said.

He also called "international financial institutions and development banks" to finance the construction of nuclear power plants.

"I would like to add in this regard that earlier this year the New Development Bank created by BRICS countries confirmed its readiness to finance nuclear projects," Putin said. According to the state-run TASS news agency, about 20,000 representatives from more than 100 countries, and senior officials from international nuclear agencies attended the summit.

Notable leaders included Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko, Acting President of Myanmar Min Aung Hlaing, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali, as well as delegates from Egypt, Iran, Niger, and Uzbekistan. *—PTI*

Interpol arrests 260 suspects in African romance scams

In Angola authorities arrested individuals who used social media to target their victims. These are their seized phones **PHOTO: INTERPOL.INT**

DAKAR, 26 SEPT

A concerted effort against cybercrime led by Interpol has resulted in the arrest of 260 individuals suspected of involvement in online romance and extortion scams across 14 African nations. The operation, which took place in July and August, specifically targeted scams where perpetrators build online romantic relationships to extract money or blackmail victims with explicit images.

According to Interpol, these scams affected over 1,400 victims who collectively lost nearly USD 2.8 million. Cyril Gout, acting executive director of police services at Interpol, highlighted the alarming trend: "Cybercrime units across Africa are reporting a sharp rise in digital-enabled crimes such as sextortion and romance scams. The growth of online platforms has opened new opportunities for criminal networks to exploit victims, causing both financial loss and psychological harm."

Notably, Ghanaian authorities arrested 68 individuals linked to romance and sextortion scams, while Senegalese police apprehended 22 suspects posing as celebrities. In Ivory Coast, 24 suspects were arrested for using fake profiles to extort intimate images from victims. *—PTI*

OVER MASS SURVEILLANCE

Microsoft reduces Israel's access to cloud

WASHINGTON, 26 SEPT

Microsoft has said it disabled services to a unit within the Israeli military after a company review determined its artificial intelligence and cloud computing products were being used to help carry out mass surveillance of Palestinians.

The action comes after The Associated Press and The Guardian published reports earlier this year revealing how the Israeli Ministry of Defence had been using Microsoft's Azure platform to aid in the war in Gaza and occupation of the West Bank. Brad Smith, Microsoft's vice chair and President, wrote in a blog post that the company was taking steps to enforce compliance with its terms of service.

An AP investigation in February showed that the Israeli military's use of Microsoft products skyrocketed after 7 October, 2023. The AP's report cited internal Microsoft data showing the Israelis were using gigabytes of cloud storage and massive amounts of AI-enabled language translation services.

The AP also reported that Israel's military used Microsoft Azure to compile information gathered through mass surveillance, which it transcribes and translates, including phone calls and text messages. That intelligence is then cross-checked with Israel's in-house AI systems for targeting airstrikes.

Microsoft then acknowledged in May that it had sold advanced AI and cloud computing services to the Israeli military. But the company said an internal review found "no evidence" Azure was used to target or harm people.

The Guardian, working in partnership with the Israeli-Palestinian publication +972 Magazine and the Hebrew-language outlet Local Call, reported in August that the commander of Unit 8200 had met directly with Microsoft chairman and CEO Satya Nadella in 2021. The Israeli unit then used Microsoft products to aid in the development of an AI-powered mass surveillance system that was sweeping up, translating and analysing millions of telephone calls per day made by Palestinian civilians.

Microsoft then commissioned a second review, this time by an outside law firm. While that review is still ongoing, Smith said Thursday the probe had uncovered evidence that its products were being used in violation of its terms of service. However, Smith did not name the specific Israeli unit losing access to Microsoft services. *—PTI*

Israel uses Microsoft's Azure platform to aid in Gaza war **PHOTO: AI**

UK to mandate digital ID to curb illegal immigration

LONDON, 26 SEPT

- Prime Minister Keir Starmer stated, "It will make it tougher to work illegally in this country, making our borders more secure," adding that it would facilitate access to health care

The UK government has announced plans to introduce mandatory digital identification cards for British citizens and permanent residents to secure employment, a move that revives a contentious issue long debated in the country. Prime Minister Keir Starmer stated, "It will make it tougher to work illegally in this country, making our borders more secure," adding that the ID cards would facilitate access to health care, welfare, and other public services.

Since the end of World War II, compulsory identity cards for citizens have not been in place, and civil rights advocates warn this measure could infringe on personal freedoms and threaten data security. Former prime minister Tony Blair's attempt to establish biometric ID cards was abandoned after significant public and parliamentary backlash. Political analyst Tim Bale remarked, "There's always been this feeling that Britain is not a so-called 'Papers, please' society," but acknowledged that a digital ID could be beneficial given the current necessity to prove identity in various situations. The Labour government is also tackling soaring migrant crossings in the English Channel, aiming to curb illegal work. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

PM to launch BSNL's 4G stack on 27 September

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to unveil Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited's (BSNL) 'Swadeshi' 4G stack on 27 September, marking India's entry into a select group of nations, including Denmark, Sweden, South Korea, and China, that manufacture homegrown telecom equipment.

Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia announced that over 97,500 mobile 4G towers will be commissioned at Jharsuguda, Odisha. Currently, BSNL has installed more than 92,600 indigenously developed 4G mobile sites that are 5G upgradable, comprising a Radio Access Network (RAN) by Tejas Networks, a core network by C-DOT, and integration by Tata Consultancy Services. More than 4,700 mobile towers have also been installed by Jio and Bharti Airtel, with additional funding for 14,180 towers through the 'saturation project'. *—PTI*

Rupee rises by 4P, closes at 88.72 against USD

MUMBAI, 26 SEPT

The rupee rebounded from its all-time low to close 4 paise higher at 88.72 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, tracking a weak greenback against major currencies overseas and a drop in global crude oil prices. Unabated foreign capital outflows and risk-off sentiment in the domestic equity market prevented a sharp rise in the local unit, while hopes of a breakthrough in the India-US trade talks supported the domestic currency, according to forex traders. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 88.72 and traded in a narrow range of 88.67-88.73 before settling at 88.72 (provisional), 4 paise higher than its previous close. *—PTI*

ESIC adds 20.36L employees to ESI scheme

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) added 20.36 lakh subscribers in July 2025. This represents over 5 per cent growth compared to June, the latest payroll data released by the labour ministry showed on Friday. As many as 31,146 new establishments were brought under the ESI Scheme in July, extending social security to more workers. Of the total 20.36 lakh employees added, 9.85 lakh, or about 48.37 per cent, belong to the age group up to 25 years. Gender-wise, 4.33 lakh female members joined, while 88 transgender employees were also registered, reflecting ESIC's commitment to all sections of society. Payroll data is provisional as data generation is a continuous exercise, the statement noted. *—PTI*

Jindal Steel expands Angul plant capacity

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

Jindal Steel on Friday commissioned a 5 million tonne per annum (MTPA) blast furnace at its Angul plant in Odisha, part of its ongoing Rs 20,000 crore expansion project. The new furnace, with an inner volume of 5,499 cubic metres, is among the largest in India, the company said. The commissioning will double the plant's steel production to 12 MTPA from the current 6 MTPA, enhancing the company's global competitiveness. Jindal Steel is part of the Naveen Jindal Group, a global industrial conglomerate with key operations in steel, energy, and mining. The Angul expansion underscores India's growing capacity in the steel sector and its strategic focus on modernisation and self-reliance. *—PTI*

Mkts tank by 1% after 100% pharma tariffs

Most pharma shares dropped, dragging the BSE Healthcare index down by 2.14%

MUMBAI, 26 SEPT

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled nearly 1 per cent on Friday, marking their sixth consecutive day of decline, following heavy selling in pharma and IT shares as US President Donald Trump announced 100 per cent duties on pharmaceutical drugs from next month.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 733.22 points or 0.90 per cent to settle at a three-week low of 80,426.46. During the day, it dropped 827.27 points or 1 per cent to 80,332.41.

The 50-share NSE Nifty tumbled 236.15 points or 0.95 per cent to an over three-week low of 24,654.70.

The index has been on a decline since 19 September, tanking over 3 per cent in six straight sessions. Sensex has tumbled by 2,587.50 points or 3.16 per cent in six sessions to Friday.

BSE Sensex tanked 733.22 points or 0.90 per cent, while NSE Nifty tumbled 236.15 points or 0.95 per cent

PHOTO: PTI

Most pharma shares dropped, dragging the BSE Healthcare index down by 2.14 per cent after Trump's move to impose 100 per cent import tariffs on pharmaceutical drugs from 1 October. Wockhardt shares tanked 9.4 per cent.

In his post on social media platform Truth Social, Trump wrote, "Starting 1 October, 2025, we will be imposing a 100 per cent Tariff on any branded or patented Pharmaceutical Product, unless a Company IS BUILDING their Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plant in America."

Among Sensex firms, Mahindra & Mahindra, Eternal, Tata Steel, Bajaj Finance, Asian Paints, Sun Pharma, Tech Mahindra, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services and HCL Tech were the biggest laggards.

However, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Motors, ITC and Reliance Industries were the gainers.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng ended significantly lower.

Equity markets in Europe were trading in positive territory. US markets ended lower on Thursday. *—PTI*

Generic drug makers may not be impacted by tariffs

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA) on Friday said US President Donald Trump's move to impose 100 per cent import tariffs on pharmaceutical drugs from 1 October will impact only patented and branded products, not generic medicines.

Reacting to the development, IPA Secretary General Sudarshan Jain said in a statement, "It is not applicable to generics medicines."

In his post on social media platform Truth Social, Trump wrote, "Starting 1 October, 2025, we will be imposing a 100 per cent Tariff on any branded or patented Pharmaceutical Product, unless a Company IS BUILDING their Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plant in America."

The US President further clarified, "IS BUILDING" will be defined as, "breaking ground" and/or "under construction." There will, therefore, be no Tariff on these Pharmaceutical Products if construction has started."

The IPA represents 23 leading Indian pharmaceutical firms, including Dr Reddy, Sun Pharma, Lupin, Zydus Lifesciences. Together, IPA members drive more than 80 per cent of India's drug and pharmaceutical exports, and serve over 64 per cent of the domestic market. Indian pharma companies largely export generics to the US market.

As per industry sources, overall, medicines from Indian companies provided $219 billion in savings to the US healthcare system in 2022 and a total of $1.3 trillion between 2013 and 2022. *—PTI*

Govt to borrow ₹6.77L cr in Oct-Mar

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

The central government will borrow Rs 6.77 lakh crore in the second half of this fiscal, reducing the total borrowing for the current financial year by Rs 10,000 crore.

In the Budget for 2025-26, the government planned a gross borrowing of Rs 14.82 lakh crore. However, it has borrowed Rs 5,000 crore less in the first half (April-September) and lowered the estimates for H2 (October-March) by a similar amount.

Thus, the total borrowing for the current fiscal is estimated to be lower at Rs 14.72 lakh crore. In the first half, the government had planned to borrow Rs 8 lakh crore, of which it borrowed Rs 7.95 lakh crore.

The gross market borrowing of Rs 6.77 lakh crore will be completed through 22 weekly auctions till March 6, 2026.

Talking to reporters, Economic Affairs Secretary Anuradha Thakur said the total gross borrowing for the year is now Rs 14.72 lakh crore, a shade lower than the initial estimates.

"I would like to reemphasise that the government is committed to meeting the fiscal deficit target," Thakur said.

The government aims to bring down fiscal deficit, the gap between expenditure and revenue, to 4.4 per cent of GDP in FY26 from 4.8 per cent in FY25. *—PTI*

SC defers VI AGR hearing to 6 Oct

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

The Supreme Court on Friday deferred the hearing on Vodafone Idea Ltd's (VIL) plea challenging an additional Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) demand of Rs 5,606 crore for the period up to 2016–17, postponing it to 6 October.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, requested the delay, noting that the government, which holds a substantial equity stake in VIL, is seeking a resolution to protect the operator's survival. "Some solution may have to be found out, subject to your lordship's approval," he said.

VIL has urged the court to direct the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) to comprehensively re-assess and reconcile all AGR dues following updated verification guidelines. AGR is the income base for calculating licence fees and spectrum charges.

Earlier, the Supreme Court rejected telecom companies' pleas to correct alleged errors in AGR calculations, which total Rs 93,520 crore nationwide. Operators were given a 10-year period from 2020 to settle outstanding dues. *—PTI*

Mkt debut: GK Energy rises, Saatvik falls

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

Shares of GK Energy Ltd, a solar-powered agricultural water pump systems provider, on Friday ended with a premium of nearly 10 per cent against the issue price of Rs 153. On BSE, shares of the firm ended at Rs 167.75 apiece, up 9.64 per cent.

On the NSE, it ended at Rs 167.74 per share, a jump of 9.63 per cent. The company's market valuation stood at Rs 3,402.26 crore.

The initial public offer of GK Energy Ltd received a whopping 89.62 times subscription as it drew to a close on Tuesday.

Additionally, shares of solar panel maker Saatvik Green Energy Ltd on Friday made a disappointing market debut and settled lower by over 5 per cent against the issue price of Rs 465.

On BSE, shares of the firm ended at Rs 439.70, down 5.44 per cent.

At the NSE, ended at Rs 440.70, down by 5.22 per cent.

The company's market valuation stood at Rs 5,588.81 crore. *—PTI*

Silver hits record high of ₹1.41L/kg; gold rises by ₹ 330

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

Silver prices surged Rs 1,900 to hit a fresh record high of Rs 1,41,900 per kilogram while gold rose by Rs 330 in the national capital on Friday, driven by heavy demand from stockists and robust festive buying, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

Gold of 99.9 per cent purity advanced Rs 330 to Rs 1,17,700 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes), from Rs 1,17,370 per 10g on Thursday.

Similarly, gold of 99.5 per cent purity climbed Rs 400 to Rs 1,17,100 per 10g, compared to Rs 1,16,700 per 10g in the previous market session.

So far this year, gold prices have surged by Rs 38,750 per 10g, or 49.08 per cent, from Rs 78,950 per 10g on 31 December, 2024, underscoring the metal's strong rally amid sustained investor interest and seasonal demand.

Silver, which had closed at Rs 1,40,000 per kilogram in the previous session, extended its record-breaking streak on the back of robust physical demand and strong investor appetite, the association said.

On a year-to-date basis, silver prices have skyrocketed by Rs 52,200 per kilogram or 58.19 per cent from Rs 89,700 per kilogram on 31 December, 2024.

In the international market, both metals traded lower. Spot gold slipped 0.12 per cent to $3,744.75 per ounce, while silver was down 0.35 per cent at $45.03 per ounce. *—PTI*

Indian households to have 27-30% tax savings from GST 2.0: FICCI

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

By reducing price disparities, GST 2.0 strengthens MSMEs and moves India closer to a unified national tax market

PHOTO: ANI

Indian households are set to save up to 27 to 30 per cent under the new GST 2.0 regime, a joint report by FICCI CASCADE and the Thought Arbitrage Research Institute (TARI) has revealed. The study, titled "Decoding the Journey of GST Reforms" highlights that the updated framework has eased the tax burden on essential and discretionary items, benefiting families across both rural and urban India.

A key change is the expansion of items taxed at the lowest 5 per cent slab, which has nearly tripled from 54 categories under GST 1.0 to 149 under GST 2.0, helping households manage monthly budgets more effectively. GST 2.0 also introduces a progressive structure, where higher-income individuals contribute a larger share, ensuring a fairer system.

Beyond household relief, the lower tax rates support small businesses, encourage economic formalisation, and deter smuggling and counterfeit trade. By reducing price disparities, GST 2.0 strengthens MSMEs and moves India closer to a unified national tax market, reshaping interactions between consumers, businesses, and the broader economy. *—ANI*

SETTLEMENT OF CLAIMS

RBI revises norms for bank accounts of deceased

MUMBAI, 26 SEPT

The Reserve Bank on Friday issued revised norms for the settlement of claims on deceased customers' bank accounts and lockers within a 15-day timeframe and prescribed compensation to nominees for delays in the settlement.

The revised instructions are aimed at streamlining the divergent practices followed by banks in the settlement of claims in respect of deceased customers.

It has also standardised the documentation to bring improvement in the quality of customer service.

The central banks said the 'Reserve Bank of India (Settlement of Claims in respect of Deceased Customers of Banks) Directions, 2025' revised instructions will be implemented as expeditiously as possible, but not later than 31 March, 2026.

The directions are related to the settlement of claims in the deposit accounts of a deceased customer, safe deposit locker and articles in safe custody by the deceased customer.

A deposit account where a depositor had made a nomination or where the account was opened with a survivorship clause, the payment of the outstanding balance upon the death of the depositor(s) to the nominee(s)/ survivor(s) shall be considered a valid discharge of a bank's liability, the RBI said.

The RBI's latest directions also prescribe norms for the settlement of claims not falling under the simplified procedure. *—PTI*

MOST AGGRESSIVE BULL RUNS

AI boom fuels market mania, Jefferies warns

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

PHOTO: FREEPIK

While Artificial intelligence (AI) spending is driving one of the most aggressive bull runs in US markets, global borkerage Jefferies has cautioned investors about growing signs of speculative excess even as gold and Chinese tech shares surge.

In its latest GREED & Fear report, Jefferies observed that the US equity rally propelled largely by AI-related capital expenditure and passive inflows has added nearly $15 trillion to the S&P 500's market value since April, an amount equal to half of America's GDP. The frenzy, however, comes amid a nearly 10 per cent fall in the US dollar index this year, its weakest performance since 2017.

The report cited the euphoric reaction to Oracle's quarterly earnings as a clear indicator of mania. Oracle's stock soared almost 40 per cent in a single day earlier this month after disclosing a five-year, $300 billion deal with OpenAI. Nvidia soon followed, pledging up to $100 billion to support OpenAI's data center buildout. Jefferies likened this cycle of vendor financing to the early-2000s tech bubble, warning that the model could unravel first in GPU-rental businesses such as CoreWeave.

Meanwhile, the Federal Reserve's policy easing continues to fuel bullish sentiment, though new Fed Governor Stephen Miran's reference to a "third mandate" of moderating long-term rates hinted at possible yield curve control--an outcome Jefferies said would weaken the dollar and boost gold.

Beyond Wall Street, China's AI-driven rally has gained momentum, supported by mainland inflows through Stock Connect. *—ANI*

- The frenzy, however, comes amid a nearly 10 per cent fall in USD index this year, its weakest performance since 2017. The report cited the euphoric reaction to Oracle's quarterly earnings as a clear indicator of mania.

Post cyberattack, Jaguar restarts IT operations

LONDON, 26 SEPT

Tata Motors-owned Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) has begun a phased restart of its IT operations following a cyber-attack that has brought the British luxury carmaker's production to a complete halt earlier this month.

In an update issued on Thursday, JLR said it is working to clear the "backlog of payments" to its suppliers by increasing its processing capacity for invoicing.

Meanwhile, production at its factories in Merseyside, northwest England, and Solihull in the West Midlands, as well as facilities around the world, including India, Slovakia and China, remain at a standstill until the "foundational work" of the recovery programme is completed.

Britain's largest car manufacturer said the Global Parts Logistics Centre, which supplies parts to distribution centres for its retail partners in the UK and around the world, is returning to "full operations".

JLR said its teams continue to work around the clock alongside cybersecurity specialists, UK government's National Cyber Security Centre and law enforcement to ensure the restart of full operations takes place in a "safe and secure manner" following a "difficult time for all connected with JLR". *—PTI*

PHOTO: X/@JOSEPH

Injured Shamar Joseph ruled out of India Tests

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

Star West Indies pacer Shamar Joseph was on Friday ruled out of the upcoming Test series against India due to an unspecified injury, with uncapped all-rounder Johann Layne replacing him in the squad. The two-match Test series is set to begin in Ahmedabad on 2 October. "Johann Layne has replaced Shamar Joseph in the squad for the Test series against India," Windies Cricket announced on X. The board did not disclose the details of the 26-year-old Joseph's injury.—*PTI*

Inaugural BFI Cup in Chennai from 1 October

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPT

Aimed at providing upcoming boxers a pathway to the national camp, the Boxing Federation of India will conduct the inaugural BFI Cup in Chennai from 1 to 7 October. The competition, which is set to be conducted in 10 categories for both men and women, will provide the gold and silver medallists with entry to the elite national camp. "Indian boxing is undoubtedly on the rise and the BFI is committed to an athlete-centric approach that is already showing good results," said BFI president Ajay Singh in a media release.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X/@SERGIO

Sergio Busquets to retire after end of MLS season

LONDON, 26 SEPT

Inter Miami's former Barcelona and Spain star Sergio Busquets said Thursday he will retire from football at the end of the 2025 Major League Soccer season. The 37-year-old midfielder announced in a social media post. "These will be my last months on the pitch. I'm retiring very happy, proud, fulfilled, and above all grateful," Busquets said in a video on his Instagram page. "A heartfelt thank you to everyone and to football for everything. You will always be a part of this beautiful story." An elegant, skillful player known for his poise and calmness on the ball, Busquets is widely regarded as one of the best defensive midfielders in history.—*PTI*

ISS JWC: Teenager Jonathan steals limelight with gold

WELLINGTON, 26 SEPT

Jonathan Antony came up with a startling performance to outclass the field, as he beat Luca Arrighi of Italy with an 8.5-point margin for the air pistol gold in the Junior World Cup at the Dr. Karni Singh Range, Tughlakabad, on Friday. The 16-year-old from Karnataka, who has Khel Ratna awardee and Olympic finalist Jitu Rai as his coach, shot an Olympic-record score of 244.8, after having topscored in qualification with an equally impressive 586. It was only his second international competition after the recent Asian Championship in Shymkent, Kazakhstan, when Jonathan won the individual junior bronze, and mixed team silver with Vanshika Chaudhary, apart from the boys' team silver. "I am very happy with the way I shot today. In the final, I was a little nervous initially. Once I saw that I had a five-point lead, I relaxed, as it was a piece of cake!" said Jonathan, even as he was reminded that he had possibly missed a world record. The world junior record is currently held by Asian Games gold medallist Saurabh Chaudhary.—*PTI*

India clinches 4 medals at Special OAP Badminton

Team India At The Special Olympics Asia Pacific Badminton Competition *PHOTO: X/@SOLYMPICSBHARAT*

KUALA LUMPUR, 26 SEPT

Team India was beaming with glee and pride at the Special Olympics Asia Pacific Badminton Competition 2025 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The athletes finished the competition with an exceptional medal haul, clinching four medals one gold and three silver medals., The Indian athletes emerged as standout performers in the Special Olympics competition after their significant medal haul put them on the map., India's dominant finish made waves over other competing nations as they had posed a genuine challenge in the competition., At the Special Olympics Asia Pacific Badminton Competition 2025, Team India emerged as the top performers at Stadium Juara in Bukit Kiara, Kuala Lumpur. Chanvi Sharma emerged as the standout performer in the women's singles competition after winning gold in the event. Chanvi went on to add a silver in the women's doubles competition while pairing up with Sujita Sukumaran. In the men's singles category, Ankit Dalal clinched a silver with his heroic performance. He went on to clinch another silver to his name in the men's doubles category after partnering with Amal Biju.

Team India competed against ten countries and put up a spirited performance in the Special Olympics Badminton Competition. A total of 63 athletes were in action at the event alongside 17 unified partners. BN Reddy, the High Commissioner of India to Malaysia, met with the athletes at the closing ceremony and congratulated them on their performance in the tournament. Dr Nadda, President of the Special Olympics Bharat, congratulated all the athletes who picked up a podium finish at the SOAP Badminton. She also expressed hope that the achievements would inspire more athletes across India. —*PTI*

'Rude' Rauf, SKY fined 30%, Farhan gets warning

Pak has complained to ICC against SKY; India appeals verdict

DUBAI, 26 SEPT

Sahibzada Farhan and Haris Rauf; (below) Suryakumar Yadav *PHOTO: PTI*

Pakistan fast bowler Haris Rauf was on Friday fined 30 per cent of his match fees for rude and aggressive behaviour during the Asia Cup Super 4s match against India last Sunday.

His teammate, Sahibzada Farhan, however, escaped with a warning without any financial penalty for his open-air gunshot celebration after the completion of his half-century in the same match."- Match referee Richie Richardson had completed his hearing on Friday afternoon at the team hotel.

Hars Rauf has been fined 30 percent of his match fees for aggressive behaviour, and Farhan has been let off with a warning," a tournament source told PTI on conditions of anonymity. Earlier, Rauf and Farhan had pleaded not guilty during their ICC hearing for allegedly provocative actions in the match against India, according to tournament sources.Both players appeared before him in person, even though the responses were in writing.

The bitter neighbours are due to clash in the final of the regional showpiece on Sunday. While Rauf had mocked the Indian fans in the stands by gesturing about falling planes, Farhan's celebration after his half-century in the game was also seen as offensive by the Indian side.

Indian captain Suryakumar Yadav has been fined 30 percent of his match fee for his comments after the Asia Cup group league fixture against Pakistan when he alluded to the military skirmish between

ASIA CUP ROW

the two countries in May, tournament sources said Friday.

It is learnt that India has appealed against the ICC's verdict. It could come on Monday, while the tournament final is scheduled to be played here on Sunday.

Pakistan had filed a complaint against Suryakumar with the ICC for making political comments after he dedicated his team's win over the arch foes on September 14 to the victims of the Pahalgam terror attack and the Indian armed forces. —*PTI*

INDIA VS PAK FINAL IN ASIA CUP

Can beat anyone, including India: Pak skipper Agha

DUBAI, 26 SEPT

Having pulled off a thrilling win over Bangladesh, Pakistan skipper Salman Ali Agha said such victories make him believe it is a "special team" and added his side has the quality to beat anyone, including India, in the Asia Cup final. Pakistan's bowlers rose to the occasion, defending a modest 135 with all their might to carve out an 11-run win in the Super 4s clash here on Thursday and book a maiden Asia Cup title showdown with arch-rivals India.

"If you win these kinds of games, then we must be a special team. Everyone played really well. There is some improvement needed in batting. But we will work on that," Agha said at the presentation.

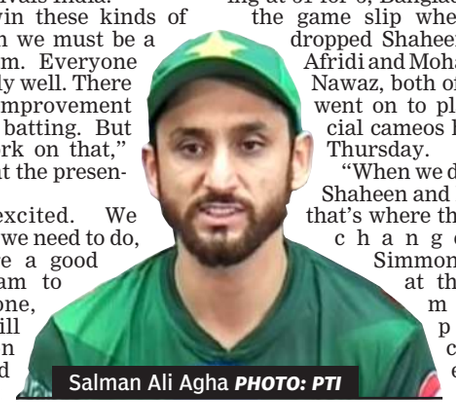
"Very excited. We know what we need to do, and we are a good enough team to beat anyone, and we will come on Sunday and try to beat them," the skipper added.

Agha made special mention of Shaheen Shah Afridi, who bagged the Player-of-the-Match award for his all-round show.

Dropped catches and bad decisions cost Bangladesh: Simmons

Bangladesh head coach Phil Simmons blamed dropped catches and bad shot-selection for the team's defeat to Pakistan, which ended its hopes for an Asia Cup final berth. Having Pakistan reeling at 51 for 5, Bangladesh let the game slip when they dropped Shaheen Shah Afridi and Mohammad Nawaz, both of whom went on to play crucial cameos here on Thursday.

"When we dropped Shaheen and Nawaz, that's where the game changed," Simmons said at the post-match press conference. —*PTI*



Salman Ali Agha *PHOTO: PTI*

Jr women hockey team lose 2-3 to Aus

CANBERRA, 26 SEPT

The Indian junior women's hockey team suffered a 2-3 loss to Australia's U21 side at the National Hockey Centre here on Friday. Lalthantluangi (47th minute) and Sonam (54th) were the scorers for India, while Bianca Zurrer (36th), Evie Sransby (45th), and Sammy Love (59th) struck for Australia.

The first half remained goalless as both sides couldn't manage to break the deadlock in a tight contest.In the 36th minute, Australia found the opening goal through a penalty corner conversion by Zurrer.Australia extended their lead with another penalty corner goal, this time courtesy of Sransby in the 45th minute.In the fourth quarter, India bounced back in the contest with two crucial goals.

In the 47th minute, Lalthantluangi converted a penalty corner to reduce the deficit. —*PTI*

Rahul, Sudharsan slam 100s as India A beat Australia A

LUCKNOW, 26 SEPT

KL Rahul and B Sai Sudharsan struck sublime hundreds as India A registered a stunning five-wicket win over Australia A while hunting down a target of 413 to seal the two-match unofficial Test series 1-0 here on Friday.

It was the sixth-highest successful run chase in the country's first-class history, and Rahul's form (176 not out, 210 balls, 16x4, 4x6) is an ominous sign for the West Indians ahead of the two-match Test series, starting next month.

The highest chase remains in the name of

West Zone when they overhauled South Zone's target of 536 in the 2010 Duleep Trophy final.

Starting the fourth and final day of their overnight 169 for two, India lost Manav Suthar at the total of 189.

India A 194 (Sudharsan 75, Thornton 4-36, Murphy 2-48) and 413 for 5 (Rahul 176*, Sudharsan 100, Jurel 56, Murphy 3-114) beat Australia A 420 (Edwards 88, Murphy 76, Suthar 5-107) and 185 (McSweeney 85*, Brar 3-42, Suthar 3-50) by 5 wickets.—*PTI*

GAUFF LAUNCHES TITLE DEFENCE IN STYLE

MADRID, 26 SEPT

Coco Gauff brushed aside Russia's Kamilla Rakhimova 6-4, 6-0 on Friday to secure a spot in the last 32 as she bids for a repeat China Open crown. The world number three from the United States will next face Canada's Leylah Fernandez in Beijing, who triumphed decisively over Greece's Maria Sakkari 6-2, 6-0.

In her first appearance since the US Open, Gauff powered through a drawn-out second game to save four break points and level for 1-1 with a cross-court winner. It was the American who broke first, landing the ball right on the line for a 4-3 lead. —*PTI*

The way cricketers push themselves inspired me: Bolt

MUMBAI, 26 SEPT

Legendary sprinter Usain Bolt says cricket was his inspiration to excel on the track after watching talented cricketers push themselves and give their all on the field.

Bolt, whose name is synonymous with speed and world records, ended his career with eight Olympic gold medals and 11 World Championships top-podium finishes, a feat never achieved by any track and field athlete. "For me, I was a huge cricket fan growing up. So, I watched cricket growing up.

Watching all the talent of the cricketers growing up and the way they worked and the way they pushed themselves and the way they carried themselves was something that inspired me at a young age to work hard and to be the best that I could be," said the Jamaican in a "Fireside chat" at the Jamnabai Narsee Campus here on Friday.

Jamaica has produced several legendary cricketers, including Michael Holding, Courtney Walsh, Chris Gayle, and Jeff Dujon, who may have had an impact on Bolt.Asked what the three words would be that describe his road to greatness, Bolt, who holds the 100m world record of 9.58 seconds, said it was all about hard work for him. —*PTI*

Usain Bolt *PHOTO: PTI*

Gukesh, Erigaisi snapped up by PBG Alaskan Knights

MUMBAI, 26 SEPT

D Gukesh and Arjun Erigaisi *PHOTO: PTI*

Top Indian Grandmasters, world champion D Gukesh and Arjun Erigaisi, will represent PBG Alaskan Knights in the upcoming Global Chess League after the duo was snapped up in a high-stakes player draft by the franchise for the third edition of the lucrative event, here on Friday.

A joint initiative of Tech Mahindra and FIDE, the third edition of GCL, featuring six teams, will be held here from December 13 to 24.

The 'Icon round' set the ball rolling as Alpine SG Pipers snapped up American GM Fabiano Caruana, PBG Alaskan Knights edged out rivals to secure Gukesh, while five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand continued to be with the Ganges Grandmasters.

World No. 5 Erigaisi sparked a three-way contest, with PBG Alaskan Knights prevailing in the end.

American Grandmaster Wesley So triggered fierce bidding before being snapped up by upGrad Mumbai Masters. Ganges Grandmasters strengthened their roster with 20-year-old Vincent Keymer. —*PTI*

Barcelona rallies to defeat Oviedo 3-1 in Spanish league

MADRID, 26 SEPT

Barcelona overcame a blunder by goalkeeper Joan García to come from behind and win 3-1 at promoted Oviedo in the Spanish league. Barcelona trailed after García gave the ball away when he left the area, and Alberto Reina scored for the hosts with a shot from near the midfield circle. The Catalan club rallied in the second half with goals by Eric García, Robert Lewandowski, and Ronald Araujo to secure its fifth win in six league matches.

The result left Barcelona two points behind leader Real Madrid, which won 4-1 at promoted Levante on Tuesday to maintain a perfect record after six rounds. "In the first half we struggled with the scoring opportunities, but in the second we picked up the pace and got the three goals and the victory that is very important for us," Lewandowski said.

Joan García's mistake came as he ventured outside the area to intercept a long pass in the 33rd minute. He used his right thigh to get the ball over one opponent and then his left foot to clear another Oviedo player. —*PTI*

WORLD PARA ATHLETICS C'SHIPS

India puts its best foot forward

BUENOS AIRES, 26 SEPT

The Indian contingent during the opening ceremony of the World Para Athletics Championships in New Delhi on Friday *PHOTO: PTI*

Some of the world's best para-athletes, including blade runners, prosthetic jumpers, and wheelchair-bound competitors, will showcase their awe-inspiring grit and resilience in the biggest ever World Para Athletics Championships beginning here on Saturday.

India, a rising power in para-sports, including para-athletics, has rolled out top-class facilities for the 12th edition of the event, which will continue till 5 October at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.

With 2,200 athletes and officials from 104 countries participating in the nine-day event, the New Delhi edition is the biggest in history, with India joining Qatar (2015), UAE (2019), and Japan (2024) as the fourth Asian nation to host the prestigious event. More than 1,500 para-athletes will compete across 186 medal events, 15 more than the 2024 edition in Japan.

The championships will witness top-class performances as over 100 athletes who won 308 medals in the Paris Paralympics, including 112 gold, are set to put their best foot forward on the grandest para-athletics stage. There will be 101 events for men, 84 for women, and a mixed event.

Praising India for providing top-class facilities for the event, World Para Athletics President Paul Fitzgerald said new world records would be made and new champions crowned. "This edition will be the largest single event para championships in history, and a credit to India for hosting this. —*PTI*